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THE WATTERSONS

A
NOVEL OF AMERICAN LIFE

BY
WILLIAM MARABELL

William M. Bell

AUTHOR OF
"THE RISE OF MAN," "THE HEART OF A ROSE"
and "SHERMAN WATTERSON"

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE.

In human life there are always undercurrents, tendencies, making slowly but surely for the progress of mankind. These undercurrents manifest themselves now in one direction, now in another, and may not be overlooked by him who, in the guise of fiction, would write the history of his time and country. The tendencies which in this particular era are agitating Society, no observer can doubt, lie in the direction of the complete equality of the sexes, politically and morally.

The widespread discontent among women today with conditions governing Society, which on the one hand deprives them of that political equality which common sense and reason assures them is their right, and on the other exacts of them a higher standard of morals than that which governs their brothers, is bound in time to work its revolution—a revolution more far-reaching than any that has gone before. Morally, it means the rise of Man to Woman's purer plane; mentally, the rise of Woman to Man's high intellectual level.

I have sought in this book to depict these conditions; to show in fictional form these tendencies at work. Not as one constituting himself champion of any reform or movement; but purely from the standpoint of an impartial historian.

It is hardly necessary to say that, while the scenes of the story are laid in Illinois, the political conditions as depicted are in no sense a study of those existing in that State. The characters, of course, are one and all fictitious. I have sought merely to represent conditions as they might be, and in Mr. Watterson have tried to portray a political boss who would be considered rather a blessing than a curse to a given community. He is not at all an impossible figure in our life, though he may be a decade or two ahead of his time.

In Myrtle Watterson I wished to portray a type of young woman tremendously on the increase in this country

—the intellectually aspiring woman, who is not only willing but eager to take an active part in the world's work. Clara Marblemore is merely a perversion of the type and is, I venture to say, representative of a large class of women who, with much that is admirable in the way of athletic culture, lack that mental poise and balance which gives to all things their just and necessary proportion. The mind, long subjected and restrained, has not kept pace with the body in growth and development during the brief generation or two in which women have been permitted to enjoy that large freedom which today is theirs. The story of little Rosie will speak for itself.

The Rev. Mortimer Ringrose is a fair representative of an order of clergymen of whom unfortunately there are too many abroad—ministers who, in seeking a passing personal popularity, prostitute not only their sacred office, but all that manhood holds of principle, honor and decency; flattering, cringing slaves to popular favor, they regard as secondary their obligations to God, and in all things model themselves and their teachings with an eye singly to please, to conciliate and to flatter those upon whose continued favor their lucrative posts depend. The type, I fear, was rather lost sight of in the man; and in this connection it should be remembered that all that is gross in him belongs to the character, and not the type portrayed.

Of the book as a whole as a picture of human life and human nature, I would state, by way of meeting certain inevitable reflections upon my choice of fictional characters, that I have purposely seized upon what is exceptional rather than what is commonplace. Given a thousand politicians, all corrupt to the core, and one who, in the midst of corruption, maintains honor, manhood, character, I prefer the one who differs from his kind. Similarly, the scoundrel in the pulpit, where scoundrelism is rare yet not entirely unknown, offers opportunities which the good and pious, and therefore commonplace, clergyman would never yield. And between the two, politics and religion, the one containing so much that is bad and the other so much that is good, I dwell preferably upon what is or may be good in the first and what undoubtedly is bad in the last. Doubtless the

primary function of the Novel is to entertain; failing in this, it fails in all; but entertainment and instruction may well go hand in hand if the underlying lesson be unobtrusively conveyed. Picturing the good in the bad or the bad in the good *may* convey a lesson; painting black in black serves but to emphasize its gloom.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that this book will not be denied the serious consideration of the critics because I have seen fit myself to publish it. This is the fourth book that I have published. The three that have gone before met with little consideration at the hands of the reviewers, being ignored for the most part. The presumption always is that a novel which bears upon its title-page the inscription "Published by the Author" is not worth a moment's notice; for has it not upon the face of it failed of the publisher's endorsement? To be sure! But of just what value upon the side of literature is the publisher's endorsement? The measure of its value is best attested by the record of the past half dozen years. Of ten thousand novels published in that period *with* such endorsement, how many have been accepted by these same critics as worth more than merely passing interest? Three? Two? *One* even? Surely one would think a judgment so irresponsible, so far from lending weight to a work of unknown quantity, would positively brand a production, whatever its pretensions, as mediocre to the last degree.

The publisher's endorsement at best is purely commercial, and for that very reason is barren of all value in a literary way. His standard of judgment is the yardstick; he looks only for negative virtues among which in a world where books, like outcast dogs, exist on sufferance, brevity, no doubt, is the greatest. Quality does not count. Workmanship does not matter. If Thackeray, unknown, entered a modern publishing establishment with "Pendennis" under his arm, he would be laughed to scorn. "Cut it down," he would be told. And unless the author complied with this request he would go unpublished until the end of time. Now, the length of a book has nothing whatever to do with its merit. It adds neither to, nor does it in the least degree, detract. It is entirely incidental, immaterial, unimportant.

It lies no more within the province of the literary critic to criticize the length of a book than it lies within the province of the art critic to criticize the size of a canvas, and only a fool among critics, or a critic among fools, would think of such a thing. Yet things have come to such a pass today that no manuscript, no matter what its merits may be, will meet with a moment's consideration at the hands of the publishers unless it be arbitrarily cut to meet the bounds prescribed by the commercial hogs who today rule all in the field of letters.

Hence an author imbued with one atom of self-respect is obliged to ignore as non-existant that tribe of greedy parasites who, with brazen effrontery masquerade as the conservators of all that is best and purest in literature when they are but the bumptious propagators of dull mediocrity to whose sordid plane they singly seek to level all *down*.

W. M.

San Francisco, Cal., March, 1907.

CHAPTER I.

MR. MARBLEMORE AT WORK.

The Great Marblemore, banker, financier, and man of affairs, issuing from the splendid portals of his home, paused for one moment upon the wide veranda to gaze arrogantly out upon the world; then slowly descended the marble steps, and slowly proceeded up the broad, white walk, which divided the lawn running to the street. He cast a final glance behind him, ere turning townward, a triumphant, gloating glance, puffing out his mighty chest portentously. A magnificent mansion truly, this gorgeous home of his, the costliest, he flattered himself, in all Clarenceburg. Never could he resist the impulse to pause and gloat at sight of this huge pile. The wide, stretching verandas curling around the wings; the marble columns, supporting the balconies above; the towering dome to the right; the turrets projecting here and there, the porticos, galleries, cornices, carvings rioting everywhere—all filled his breast with unalloyed delight. To him this colossal structure appeared sublimely beautiful, a very masterpiece of artistic achievement. There it stood, a monument to his millions, and there, too, stood John and James in livery, and in the background George and Henry lurked, ready at a nod from the master to spring to do his bidding. The banker paused for a moment to bathe his soul in the joy of it, then briskly turned away.

It was a beautiful day in early spring. The trees which lined the street were beginning to put forth tender green leaves; the lawns, newly green, glistened in the sun like velvety satin. A gentle breeze came sweeping across the City, laden with the fragrance of the surrounding prairies. The banker squared his mighty shoulders and blew forth his breath explosively. Overhead the birds were chattering cheerfully and darting in and out among the trees in mad abandon.

"A beautiful day," murmured the banker, softly smiling; and promptly stiffened to answer with becoming dignity the respectful greeting of a passing citizen. The Great Marblemore, banker, financier and man of affairs, never relaxed his dignity in public.

A man somewhat past fifty, of burly build, stout without being fat or flabby, the banker looked the picture of rugged health and strength. The great, red face was smooth shaven, save for a bristling mustache of reddish hue, clipped sharply on a line with his upper lip. There was something bovine in the straightforward gaze of his eyes; the massive chin bespoke an iron will as the forehead, broad and high, affirmed a strong mentality. The careless negligence of his attire contrasted oddly with his haughty demeanor. The banker cared nothing for dress; he was sufficient unto himself. A self-made man, a man of millions, supremely satisfied with his millions and his maker.

He met many people as he strode briskly along—his fellow-townsmen, and visiting farmers from the surrounding country, with all of whom he exchanged curt greetings, for he knew them all and was known to all, and hugely admired as a man of enormous wealth and power. Some few showed a disposition to pause and enter into conversation, but the banker pushed on brusquely, bestowing a nod here, a word there; or it may be, a freezing glance in reply to some irrelevant youth, whose hilarious greeting bordered too closely upon familiarity. A close observer following the great man's actions during that brief walk, might then and there have told to a fraction the financial standing of each individual crossing his path.

Like most Western towns of its size, Clarenceburg had its center of being in a public square, in the middle of which stood the Court House, a stately structure whose towering dome loomed large in the distance. The banker glanced with puckered brow at the gilded clock, whose hands pointed warningly at two, and he struck into a brisker stride. The residential district began presently to give way to the business section. Stores and shops, whose glittering glass fronts verged upon the street, followed one another so closely that soon they presented a solid, unbroken wall of glass, all

ablaze with signs and names and trade-marks. Before one of these, within hailing distance of the square, the banker half paused, casting a venomous glance at the inscription upon the ground glass door.

"The Clarenceburg Chronicle," the inscription read, at sight of which the banker scowled until all you could see of his eyes was a double glint, indescribably vindictive. But he went on with head bowed in thought.

He reached the end of the street, and was just turning into the square when a man, a minister from his dress, coming briskly around the corner, almost ran him down.

"Pardon me! Ah, Brother Marblemore, I'm delighted to see you," exclaimed the minister, a little breathless from the unexpected encounter. "I am making the rounds, you see, getting acquainted. A beautiful little city truly, Brother."

The banker frowned, but permitted the other to grasp his big paw, and shake it fervently.

"I'm glad you like it," he responded dryly, and was about to make off when the minister detained him.

"One moment, Brother Marblemore," he said, hastily; "I understand that you are expecting your son home from college shortly."

"My step-son, sir; my step-son merely," the banker replied stiffly.

"Indeed! Your beautiful and accomplished daughter, in speaking of him this morning, mentioned him by name, and I understood—"

"He has taken my name because I desired it, but—" the great man concluded with a wave of his hand.

"I see, I see. And Miss Watterson, too, is returning on Saturday, I hear. Well, well! I shall have a number of young people to work with. I hope, Brother, that the young man—your step-son—will become an active member of the church—as valuable to us, if that were possible, as the man whose name he has the honor to bear."

"I hope so," replied Mr. Marblemore, composedly; "but he is rather wild from all I hear."

"Ah, youth, youth," murmured the minister, smiling

indulgently. "Human nature is weak, Brother, and young men will be young men."

"Just so. And now if you will excuse me, Mr. Ringrose, I have an important meeting to attend."

"To be sure, Brother," replied Mr. Ringrose, deprecatingly. "The time of so important a man is too precious, of course—"

With a wave of his hand the banker passed on, and crossing the street, he gained the Court House lawn, a beautiful expanse of greensward traversed by gleaming walks, around which he made his way to the opposite side of the square, and so to the Clarenceburg National Bank, which stood in the exact center of a block of business buildings facing the Court House.

"Anybody been here, Johnson?" asked the great banker, passing into his private office.

"No, sir," very humble that Johnson. "No one of importance, sir. Ferguson, the grocer—"

"What of him?" queries the banker haughtily, as Johnson comes to an untimely pause, coughing deprecatingly.

"He insists upon seeing you personally, sir. Can't meet certain notes," he says.

"There's Ainsworth, Davidson, Jameson."

"So I told him, sir," replied Johnson, again coughing deprecatingly, "but he demands a personal interview with you, sir."

"Where is he?"

"He went away, sir, saying that he would return immediately. Ah, there he is now!"

"Show him in."

Johnson, the confidential man and secretary, hands the banker several letters, then ushers in the persistent Ferguson—a little round ball of a man, resembling an apple dumpling both in form and feature, having a round head, a round belly and round cheeks to match them. He is past middle age and quite grey, both as to hair and beard, which last is short and curly, like the wool of a very young lamb. An innocent, peevish little man, whose perpetual expression of ill-usage was oddly out of place on his rubicund counte-

nance. He waited patiently enough, standing beside the great man's desk, and gazing in a kind of astonishment down at the banker, who sat there so cool, so calm and mighty.

The banker's private sanctum was a small box of a room placed in a corner with a screened and curtained window looking out upon the square. It was enclosed by a thick grating, handsomely gilded, through which, by glancing across Johnson's little box, the banker commanded a view of the outer floor in front of the teller's window as well as of the interior, where a dozen young and old men were engaged in posting large ledgers. How low they bend with the great man by! Hardly daring to breathe it seemed. One comprehensive glance he cast around before taking up his letters. Not a sound save the busy scratching of pens, figuring up the accruing wealth of the great Marblemore, banker, financier and man of affairs. The letters finished, the great man turned to Ferguson.

"Well, sir," he said with dignity.

"I—I—that is, you have some notes of mine, Mr. Marblemore," stammered Ferguson, turning almost purple beneath the banker's cold glance, and shifting nervously from one foot to the other. "They fall due tomorrow, and I cannot meet them, sir. Not right away, anyhow."

"Well, sir," again said the banker, without abating a jot in his dignified bearing.

"I want to ask you to give me more time."

"You have seen Ainsworth?"

"Yes," said Ferguson, with sudden irritation, "I saw the whole damn clique of them—Ainsworth, Johnson, Zindle, Davidson, Jameson, but all they can talk about is the rules of the bank, strict orders and the like. I never seen such a set of cringing puppies. They seem to be afraid to call their souls their own."

"You understand, Mr. Ferguson," said the banker, drumming upon the desk with his thick red fingers, "that there is no use in having rules unless you live up to them."

"Oh, yes, in the main," said Ferguson, querulously, "but I don't believe in rules at all."

"And you are, in consequence, in difficulties," said the banker coldly.

"Not on account of not having no rules," said Ferguson, angrily. "It's all luck. I've got the most infernal luck of anyone I know of. I am always in hot water. Always!"

"Luck does not count in business, sir! Poor management, Mr. Ferguson, poor management."

"Poor hell, sir!" roared the excited little man. "Do you call working from four in the morning till ten at night poor management?"

"You keep no books, sir; you have no system."

"But I work."

"Work," said Mr. Marblemore, disdainfully, "an ass works, but he remains an ass until the end of time. You must work with method and intelligence to succeed at anything."

He cast a glance over his own successful institution, and threw out his mighty chest, waving his hand toward the dozen young and old men at work in the interior.

"Oh, yes," grumbled Ferguson, "but I didn't come here to take lessons from you, but to ask you for time in which to fix up them notes. I'm good for the money."

Very likely if the man had been properly humble and supplicating, he would have attained his desires, for Mr. Marblemore was by no means a hard man, but his independent attitude not unnaturally irritated the great man.

"The notes are due tomorrow," said the banker, "and tomorrow they must be paid—"

He finished the sentence by turning to his letters again. Mr. Ferguson glanced at him half ruefully, half angrily. He opened his mouth to speak more humbly, then closed his lips firmly, and with an angry shake of the head, strutted out.

Mr. Marblemore glanced at his costly gold watch. Two-thirty!

"Mr. Dayton," announced Johnson at this moment, and a slender little man came bounding in.

"Hot as hell, ain't it, Marblemore?" he gasped, shaking hands cordially.

"Pretty warm," replied the banker, as cold as ice, as he motioned the other to a chair.

"Mr. Everhard," announced Johnson.

A middle-aged man, contrasting sharply with the excited Mr. Dayton, came strolling leisurely in, looking pleasantly cool and imperturbable. He shook hands with Mr. Marblemore with a quiet "How do?"

The banker waved him to a seat. Dayton plunged forward excitedly.

"Hot as hell, ain't it, Everhard?" he gasped.

"Mr. Bennett," announced Mr. Johnson.

"How do you do, Marblemore? Ha, Dayton, Everhard, good-day," said Mr. Bennett, in a loud and pompous voice.

The banker nodded, Mr. Everhard waved a graceful hand. Mr. Dayton plunged at Bennett's first, which he grasped and shook with warmth and cordiality.

"Hot as hell, ain't it, Bennett?"

"Mr. Langhorn," announced Johnson.

Big, florid man Langhorn, with a sly but jovial look, bows all around, and reluctantly relinquishes his hand to Mr. Dayton's passionate greeting.

"Mr. Watterson," announced Johnson.

Then Mr. Marblemore rose up for the first time, and with a smile of warmest friendship went to meet the big, handsome politician as he came in, in his grave, majestic way, surrendering his hand to Dayton with a droll look of helplessness.

"Hot as hell, ain't it, Watterson?" gasped the excited little man.

A man of gigantic stature he seemed to fill the room, so tall he loomed, so broad of shoulder and vastly proportioned. His cheeks had the ruddy glow of health; the face enframed in a short, rippling brown beard was very handsome. His eyes were brown in color, and as gentle in their expression as any woman's. Altogether, a man of distinguished presence, quiet, grave, unassuming, he bodied forth the typical Westerner, both in the wide freedom of movement with which he advanced into the little room, and in the negligent ease of his attire, which consisted of a black frock coat thrown carelessly open, revealing a white waistcoat above which a snowy expanse of linen terminated in a narrow collar of the turn-down variety, with the merest string of black ribbon arranged in a bow at the throat. A black

slouch hat, high of crown and broad of brim was loosely set upon the back of his head, exposing to the full a brow both high and broad, with masses of silvering locks curling thickly out beneath the drooping brim.

"Another chair, Johnson," cries Mr. Marblemore. "A chair for Mr. Watterson!"

With his own hands the banker takes the chair from Johnson and places it directly opposite his own.

"Quite pleasant out, Winfield?"

"Yes, Andrew, spring is here, depend upon it," replied Mr. Watterson, smiling.

Some social talk ensued among them all, Mr. Marblemore addressing all his discourse to Mr. Watterson. Mr. Langhorn was fervid but sly, Mr. Dayton hot and excited, Mr. Everhard cunningly composed, Mr. Bennett loud and pompous, and Mr. Watterson quiet and dignified, but rather bored than otherwise.

"The papers, Johnson," said the banker, glancing through the window at the Court House clock. "Mr. Bennett, if you please."

Mr. Bennett takes some papers from Johnson, adds a few of his own, and after some arranging begins to read. This evidently is a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Watterson Broom Works, of which Mr. Watterson is President and Mr. Marblemore, Vice-President. They listen to Mr. Bennett in smiling complacency, suggestive of large dividends. So much business for the month past; so much on hand; such and such expense; reports of agents; statements of accounts; outlying debts; crop reports, conditions, prices, etc., etc. Report of superintendent, necessary repairs, hoped for improvements, needed enlargements, suggestions, remarks, etc., etc. General satisfaction, smiles of approval at Mr. Watterson, congratulations to Mr. Bennett; cigars passed around; five minutes social conversation, in which all join genially; then departure of Bennett, Dayton and Everhard. Mr. Watterson and Mr. Langhorn remain. Mr. Marblemore looks at his watch; Mr. Langhorn looks at *his* watch. Mr. Watterson, lazily twisting his slender watch chain, glances up at the Court House clock; three

o'clock all round. Impatience manifested on the part of Mr. Marblemore.

"Mr. Davidson," announces Johnson, and in rapid succession Mr. Davenport, Mr. Joseph, Mr. Cutting and Mr. Goldberg, all important men of affairs, residents of this and neighboring cities, and directors of the Clarenceburg Bank, of which Mr. Marblemore is President and Mr. Watterson, Vice-President.

"Johnson, call Ainsworth."

Ainsworth, a priestly-looking man, comes in. Reads papers, statement of accounts, deposits so and so, outstanding loans so much, notes, mortgages, etc., etc. More discussion, more satisfaction, cigars are lighted, and again the dozen young and old men in the interior are regaled with the prosperous laughter and gay, bantering tones of their sleek employers. How pleasant it sounds! What satisfaction it yields them! Lord! Lord! Glowing and perspiring with rapture, they bend over their fat ledgers, and scratch away for dear life, and the pittance that makes that dear life possible. Meeting lasts half an hour. Mr. Marblemore shakes hands in a dignified, unbending manner, with all at parting, but accompanies Mr. Watterson to the outer door, where they part with mutual friendliness and a warm pressure of the hand.

"By the way, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson, "Ferguson has been to me about those notes."

"Yes," said the banker, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes. Turn them over to my private account."

"He does not deserve it, Winfield."

"If we received no more than our deserts, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson mildly, "we would have rather a hard life of it; Ferguson is a worthy and hard-working man, but unfortunate."

"His misfortune is his own fault. No system, no method in his business. However, you need not trouble, Winfield, Ferguson's paper is good. I wished merely to teach him a lesson in his manner of bearing himself when suing for favors."

"He *is* an independent sort of man," replied Mr. Wat-

terson, smiling. "But that, Andrew, is, in my opinion, a trait of character to be cultivated and encouraged."

The banker shook his head, frowning.

"I am going to call on General Hamilton this evening," he said in a casual way. "About the street railway, you know."

"A bad move, Andrew."

"But a necessary one."

Mr. Watterson shook his head disapprovingly.

"Better stay away," he said. "You are sure to clash."

"Very well," responded the banker coldly. "Then clash it is. I think better of him, however. He can be made to see the folly of antagonizing Me, I think; at any rate, I shall endeavor to make it clear to him."

"You do not know the General, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson, with a chuckle of intense enjoyment. "Let him alone. He loves a fight as other men love peace."

"I shall call."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, speak him gently," said the big man, still laughing.

They shook hands once more and parted.

"Anything of Demorest yet, Johnson?" asked the banker, returning briskly to his private office.

"Nothing." But with the word, Mr. Demorest puts in an appearance, and is promptly ushered into the banker's private office. Tall, thin, reddish man, Demorest, counsellor for the P. D. & Q. Railroad. Very quiet and imposing in manner. Is given ten minutes, and is succeeded by Mr. Markham, who is followed by Mr. Dougherty, who gives way to Mr. Everett, who is, in rapid succession, followed by Mr. Babman, Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Mansfield and Mr. Densmore—all cogs in the vast money-making machine operated by the Great Marblemore, banker, financier and man of affairs—heads of the various branches of the bank, agents in various important enterprises, middlemen between Mr. Marblemore and various other institutions, and representatives of various Eastern corporations with which Mr. Marblemore is connected. For, from this little country town the Great Marblemore wields a tremendous power that stretches over many states, and is lodged in many cities—a

power given by money, and used to make more and ever more money. For money is the life, the breath, the very soul of the Great Marblemore, banker, financier and man of affairs.

"Now for General Hamilton," muttered the banker grimly, as he went into the street. But his step became slower as he neared the editorial sanctum. Few men there were in the city of Clarenceburg who would not have hesitated at the thought of bearding that journalistic lion in his den. But Mr. Marblemore went on, albeit slowly, and bringing up at the General's door, resolutely mounted the steps and entered the outer office of the Clarenceburg Chronicle.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH MR. MARBLEMORE BEARDS THE LION IN HIS DEN.

The Clarenceburg Chronicle was a four-page weekly, old-fashioned in every department, and strikingly resembling an ordinary blanket in shape and dimensions. It was strictly Democratic in politics, not of immediate local application. The principal feature of the Chronicle and the one most popular with its readers was its bristling editorial page, which in a manner peculiarly its own, treated of every subject of passing interest, assailed men and measures with fearlessness and power, and in all things pertaining to the world at large, assumed those airs of superiority and dictatorial proprietorship which properly belonged to it as the guide, philosopher and friend of all mankind.

There was an individuality about the Chronicle which no other paper in the city possessed. It was an unamiable, narrow, bigoted, intensely egotistic individuality to be sure; but unique and attractive for all that. It was always a matter of conjecture, of interesting speculation, among Chronicle readers as to what their organ would have to say on a given subject of current interest. That it would have something to say was certain, and that something invariably became the opinion of those who read the paper.

The editor of the Chronicle was decidedly a man of opinions, and one who believed in expressing those opinions as forcefully as possible. He was master of a certain forceful English, a clear, nervous virile style, and was never at a loss for a homely illustration to clearly convey his meaning. The General believed that the function of a newspaper was primarily to expose and attack all manner of fraud and rascality. The spreading of news was to him of secondary importance. He believed in striking straight from the shoulder, the straighter and harder the better. He was of the old school of journalism, a past master in the art of vilification. He could hold a hapless victim up to ridicule

or savagely nail him to the cross with equal ease. He took a grim pleasure in the task. He cared nothing for feelings trampled upon; he never considered consequences. He was headstrong, obstinate, violent, dictatorial and cock-sure.

The General could not argue. He knew nothing of logical reasoning. Beginning an editorial designed to demonstrate the fallacy of a given theory, he would invariably end by hurling things at the head of him with whom the theory had orginated. He often started out gravely to show how a certain legislative enactment would benefit or harm—say the farmers at large—but before he had clearly explained the nature of the particular act alluded to he would have worked himself into a fury and entirely forgetful of his fundamental purpose he would pitch into the lawmakers as a body and fiercely denounce them as villains, hyenas, highway robbers and murderers at large. He would descend to the most scurrilous language, he would stop at nothing; he was merciless.

In the early days of the Chronicle's career the General had been frequently called to account by furious victims of his biting rancor, but he had shown himself absolutely devoid of fear. Men had entered his editorial sanctum horsewhip in hand, but the whip had never been laid across the old warrior's square shoulders. He had been shot at, and far from offering the other cheek he had, on several occasions, returned the fire with results rather discouraging to those contemplating similar attacks. Several men had been carried feet foremost out of the Chronicle building, and the editorial page of that ferocious organ was rather blank for several weeks after one such encounter; but those days were past now, much to the General's regret.

He had indeed, once upon a time, defied the entire population of Clarenceburg. That was in the third or fourth week of the General's incumbency. There was little known of the General at that time, nor indeed was there much known now. That he was of Southern birth and breeding was a matter of common knowledge; that he had been a Confederate officer, and had fought against the North, he never lost an opportunity of proclaiming. He had come to Clarenceburg as the guest of Mr. Watterson, and after a

stay of two or three months he had bought the then almost defunct Chronicle, and had set out to build up its waning circulation. The very first issue of the paper, after coming into his hands, contained a long editorial on the then popular theme—the Civil War, and the discussions rising out of it, in which he defended the cause of the South and fiercely arraigned the North for its course before, during and after those four terrible years. That is he started out to do this, but falling afoul of General Grant early in the argument, he paused long enough to administer a kick or two to the prostrate form of that hero; and remembering, as he proceeded, that there were others equally guilty, he continued through a long catalogue of revered heroes of the North, covering them all with a mass of blazing scorn and vituperation. This, coming from a Northern town and paper at a time when the feeling against the South still ran very high, aroused widespread comment and anger. In a single week the Chronicle leaped from obscurity into the widest kind of prominence. The article was copied everywhere, and the General was denounced from one end of the State to the other as a rebel and a blackguard. The General read the exchanges and chuckled, then wrote a second screed even fiercer than the first, in which he breathed defiance to the entire North, and of all things attacked the personality and record of Lincoln, calling him a clod, an awkward boor, a vulgar, shambling, ungainly creature, a cunning politician and trickster. This article, like the first, was received with widespread rage and threats and vilification.

In the course of the week the General was waited upon by a committee of gentlemen who, declaring themselves the representatives of the citizens of Clarenceburg, informed him that he must cease his senseless tirades, which brought disgrace upon the city, or leave the town. The General, in the wildest rage, drove them from his doors, and sitting down in a white heat of anger composed a tirade upon the forbidden subject, savage and virulent enough to raise the hair on the heads of those who read it. On the evening of its publication, he was beseiged in his office by a mob of excited and exceedingly angry citizens whose avowed purpose it was to run the General out of town, after first tar-

ring and feathering him as a warning and example to all beholders.

As the story ran, the General, foaming with rage and scorn, faced the mob, pistol in hand, and held them at bay, defying them one and all to come on and get him; but swearing to shoot the first man that dared to advance upon him. It would, no doubt, have gone hard with the hot-headed old fellow, for his furious assailants were closing in upon him, had it not been for the opportune arrival of Mr. Watterson, the General's friend, then a grave, young lawyer and rising politician. In a few, calm words he succeeded in quelling the anger and staying the determination of the ringleaders of the mob, and taking possession of his choleric friend, he talked to him long and earnestly, with the result that in the ensuing issue of the Chronicle, the General contented himself with attacking various contemporary organs, which had been particularly bitter and vigorous in assaults upon him. In place of the usual tirade dealing with past events of bitter memory, there were four brilliant little essays, one of which neatly laid out a certain state senator who at the moment was making himself particularly obnoxious to the good folk around about; the second fired a broadside into the Governor for vetoing a certain measure, the benefits of which the General did not trouble himself to explain; the third prettily discussed the advantages to be derived to the city by the possession of a park, and the fourth gave an exceedingly witty account of the doings of the City Council. These little editorials struck a note wholly new and charming. The citizens and farmers of Clarence County were not used to having matters of current interest discussed in their local papers, and as the Chronicle continued with growing brilliance in the path which it had struck at, subscriptions began to pour into the Chronicle office; and the General in high good humor with himself and his readers, exerted himself to the utmost to make his paper a bright and readable one, and before long the Chronicle was firmly established as the popular organ of the county.

The General carried on unceasing warfare with a dozen surrounding contemporaries. His paper was known far and

wide as "The Rebel." Whatever differences engendered by local discussions these papers had among themselves, they all united in attacking the Chronicle and humorously abusing the General. They misquoted his apt quotations, pretended to find evidences of filching in his columns, ridiculed his forceful English, poked fun at his style and, in short, did everything they could to arouse the choleric old warrior and provoke an angry retort, and they succeeded admirably. In a column headed "With Our Contemporaries," the General dealt with them from week to week, to the uproarious amusement of all men engaged in country newspaper work. But though they thus abused and mocked and ridiculed his methods and mannerisms, they all loved the old man and admired his undoubted journalistic genius.

The General asked no favors and accepted none. His paper was in no sense a competitor with the two city dailies, but was read alike by Democrats and Republicans in addition to their regular party organs. The General solicited no advertisements and accepted such as came to him only from week to week. He sought no subscribers, asked for nothing, demanded nothing but independence. He was away behind the age in business methods, and this would, no doubt, in time tell upon his paper. He had many bitter enemies among the more substantial citizens of Clarenceburg, for the more important the man the greater was the General's delight in assailing him. He took the keenest pleasure in airing their little foibles, and in satirizing their more eccentric traits of character; and some few, lacking that sense of humor by the grace of which some of us can enjoy a little fun at our own expense, chose to resent the General's play of humor, and thus incurred the vigorous enmity of that gentleman. Among these was Mr. Marblemore the great banker. The General despised the man, and never lost an opportunity of rapping him. He was an expert paragraphist. In a column headed "Chronicle and Comment," he revelled riotously in humorous little digs and hits directed at the more prominent citizens of the state and city. Mr. Marblemore's name figured there every week. His ostentation, his pride of purse, his arrogance of bearing, his insatiable craving for wealth and ever more wealth,

afforded the General endless opportunities for satirical comment and scornful allusion, beneath which the stiff banker writhed and fumed.

Not only in this did he anger Mr. Marblemore; he antagonized the banker at every turn. Mr. Marblemore's business connections were very wide; how far they extended beyond the narrow confines of the city was not generally known, but in the city his was the most potent of all names in matters of industrial concern. Whenever there was a city franchise wanted for any purpose, or a city grant, or favor, the name of Marblemore was sure to be at the head of the company soliciting it. It was so in building the costly water works and reservoir, in purchasing ground for the park, in lighting the city; and now in the matter of the contemplated street railway it was Marblemore again who was knocking at the door of the City Council. All this angered the General not a little. He gave the banker no credit for civic pride, nor chose to acknowledge the man's marvelous business ability; but hating the grasping greed which, in his opinion, prompted the banker's unceasing business activity, he heaped him with abuse and scorn and vituperation.

This was particularly unfortunate for Mr. Marblemore in the matter of the street railway. The Chronicle was still a power in the city, though a slowly waning one, and its vigorous opposition to the proposed innovation threatened to set at naught all of the banker's well-laid schemes. The consent of two-thirds of the property owners along the line of the proposed route must necessarily be obtained before the matter could even be presented for consideration to the City Council, and these property owners, for the most part old fogies with old fogy notions, incited by the General's furious denunciations, absolutely refused to concede the matter at all. And so matters rested. Nothing could be done until the General was won over or silenced, and so the banker, smothering his anger and swallowing his pride, had determined to call upon the General. He had sent various emissaries, but to no avail. The General turned a deaf ear to their arguments. He would not explain the grounds of his opposition save through the columns of the Chronicle.

He chose to oppose the thing and that was all. Mr. Marblemore should have taken warning by the fate of his emissaries but he did not. From remarks let fall by the General during his talk with Mr. Bennett, the last-named gentleman rather believed that he would treat with Mr. Marblemore, and Mr. Marblemore only, and so the great man who never permitted private feelings to stand in the way of business, chose to ignore the long-existing coldness and enmity between them.

The General was sitting in the editorial sanctum with feet cocked high, conversing amiably with young Watterson, his youthful assistant, when Daniel, from the outer office, thrust his woolly head into the room.

"Misto Ma'blemo', Marse Dave," he announced, showing all his glistening ivories in a grin of breadth and pleasure.

And the next moment the banker walked into the room in his stiff, unbending manner, and pausing at a short distance, sought to make out the General's face and form in the smoke that eddied like clouds in the corner where his desk was placed. The General rose, took one quick step forward, then paused and looked sharply at his visitor. The look boded the banker no good. The General's tongue was as sharp as his pen, and his manner to those towards whom he felt hostile was as ferocious as his method of wielding the little instrument of his fortunes.

"Good morning, General Hamilton," said the banker, stiffly.

The General bowed slightly, but did not otherwise answer.

Sherman came forward quickly and placed a chair for the banker, which courtesy he acknowledged by a slight nod, but declined.

"To what do I owe the distinguished honah of a visit from Mr. Ma'blemo'?" said the General in a tone of savage irony, which, however, escaped the banker. He was a straightforward man and unused to distinguishing between differing shades of tones. He, moreover, held himself in such high estimation that he felt a visit from him to

be a distinguished honor to any one, as, no doubt, it would have been considered by any of his business associates.

"I wished to see you, sir, upon the subject of our proposed street railway," said Mr. Marblemore, drawing himself up slightly.

"Ah!" said the General, bringing the ends of his thick grey mustache together beneath his chin and tugging at them, while glaring at the banker.

"Mr. Bennett was here—".

"Yes, and Mr. Langhorn," interrupted the General, "and Mr. Dayton and Mr. Remington, and now Mr. Ma'blemo' does me the distinguished honah to call upon me!"

This time Mr. Marblemore glanced at him sharply, but the General's face was impassive as a mask.

"Yes, Mr. Bennett thought that while you were still opposed to us, you would, if I called—"

"If Mr. Ma'blemo' called," prompted the General, as the banker paused.

"You would not perhaps be adverse to listening to reason."

"Oh Lord!" thought Sherman, who sat looking on and listening.

"Ah!" said the General slowly, "I would not pe'haps be adve'se to listening to reason."

"Upon what grounds do you oppose us, sir?"

"If Mr. Ma'blemo' would read the Chronicle he would find the ansa'h to that question tha'h."

"But I do not read the Chronicle," said Mr. Marblemore, impatiently.

"That is Mr. Ma'blemo's loss."

"And you know very well why I do not read the Chronicle."

"Yes," said the General, carefully dusting the lapel of his coat, "tha'h are animals so thin-skinned that they cannot bear a little necessary application."

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"Mr. Ma'blemo' may put any construction he pleases upon my words," said the General with a scowl.

The banker swallowed hard, and with extreme difficulty

controlled his resentment. Sherman felt sorry for him, and wished he had not come. The General's manner was one of studied insolence, which invariably preceded a violent outbreak.

"Come, General," said Mr. Marblemore, coughing slightly behind a large red hand, and showing a smiling face. "We need not quarrel about it. I came to ask you frankly to look more deeply into the matter. Our city is large and constantly growing; a railway such as we propose will be of great benefit to our citizens, and no citizen should oppose it out of pure obstinacy. In time we shall connect Waterville, Clarence, Downing's Grove and all outlying points with the county seat, and eventually run to Charleston, Newton and all neighboring towns of size. But all this will take time, and we must begin in a small way. We ask you to look more closely into the matter, and if you cannot bring yourself to support us perhaps you will remain neutral and not oppose us. I will tell you candidly that we have met with much hostility among the property owners along the line of our proposed route, and their opposition is founded solely upon the grounds first presented by the Chronicle."

"Which Mr. Ma'blemo' not being a readah of the Chronicle, is unfamila' with," said the General.

"On the contrary, sir, I know them well," retorted the banker contemptuously, "and it is because I could hardly accredit such childish and absurd reasoning to a sensible man that I have come to see you, to inquire into your real reasons for opposing us. The beauty of our streets is all very well, General, but that beauty is, or should be, of secondary consideration. Business comes first nowadays, and it is decidedly to the advantage of our city from a business standpoint to have a means of rapid communication between our city and the outlying farms and villages. This is a progressive age, General, and we should move forward with the age we live in, and not lag behind with the past."

"Mr. Ma'blemo' pleads his cause well," sneered the General.

Mr. Marblemore's face assumed a purple hue, and again

he swallowed hard. He did not like the word "plead," and he decidedly disliked the General's tone.

"I am speaking for our city, sir," he said, "my cause, as you call it, is secondary, and in that sense it is also the the cause of several of the more prominent of our citizens, Mr. Watterson among them." He laid particular emphasis upon the name, having in mind the close friendship existing between the General and its distinguished owner. "Our outlay will be large, and the prospect of immediate gain very slim, and can but come when we have completed the system of which I gave you an outline in the beginning. Much money will be expended and many men will be employed, and he would be a mean-spirited citizen who, seeing all this, should still oppose us."

"I am sorry that Mr. Ma'blemo' should considah me a mean-spirited citizen," said the General; "I really do not see how I shall bear up under the blow!"

"You cannot deny, sir," said the banker, unable longer to quell his rising anger, "that a citizen who from ignorance, or obstinacy, or from whatever motive, chooses deliberately to oppose that which is clearly for the benefit of the city, is a mean-spirited citizen."

"How can I deny anything that Mr. Ma'blemo' is pleased to state as a fact?"

The banker straightened his burly shoulders, facing the General, hot with anger.

"Do you mean to fight me, sir?" he asked in a low voice.

"Fight the Great Ma'blemo'! What folly! What inconceivable madness!"

"General Hamilton, I ask you again, do you mean to fight me?"

"I shall fight any scheme, or plan, or thing with which you are connected, suh," roared the General, suddenly bristling with fury. Sherman breathed a sigh of relief. This humor was more natural to the choleric old warrior, and the very protraction of his mocking spirit made him less violent than he would have been. "I shall at all times and under all su'cumstances oppose anything in which the name of Ma'blemo' figures, suh!"

"Why?" demanded the banker, glaring.

"Because the name stinks of money, suh, because it is foul with money, because you could not be connected with any scheme, or plan, or thing unless tha'h was money—much money—to be gotten out of it by you, because you are always planning, scheming and dreaming of ways of making money. You anxious for the welfa'h of the city? Faugh! Fo' every dollah you spend you expect a hundred in return."

The ruddy color all forsook Mr. Marblemore's face beneath this savage arraignment. He stood for some minutes glaring in speechless rage and astonishment at his implacable enemy. The General stood glaring in return. They contrasted oddly these two,—the banker big, burly, ungainly, a man of commonest clay, whose clothes hung about him in baggy wrinkles, whose hands were huge and red, whose face had never lost a certain stolidness born of generations of slaving forbears; the General tall, thin, austere, the very pink of elegance and grace, the personification of haughty arrogance in face and bearing—a handsome old man, proud, stiff, domineering with a leonine head and eyes of flashing black; his hair, worn rather long, was silvery grey; a thick mustache of darker hue, and a neat imperial completed a countenance of rare strength and beauty.

They contrasted oddly indeed, as they stood glaring in mutual hatred, yet they were alike in this, that each bore himself with unbending stiffness and dignity in the face of the world. There was, however, a subtle difference even in this their one point of similarity. The General's hauteur was natural, a part of him. It was engrained in his very nature, the result of breeding, of youthful training, thought and environment. With Mr. Marblemore, it was a thing assumed, like an ill-fitting cloak of whose ungainly cut and fashion he was forever uneasily conscious. Sherman thought that oddly enough the banker in assuming the bearing and demeanor which he thought befitted a man of his wealth and greatness had consciously or unconsciously modeled himself upon the General, his bitterest enemy, whose courtly ease and calm dignity of deportment he secretly admired and envied.

"General Hamilton," said Mr. Marblemore as the color

returned in volume to his cheeks. "Upon my soul, I'll make you rue those words."

"Faugh!" replied the General, turning his back upon him.

"Upon my soul, I will," repeated the banker.

He stood eyeing the General in a kind of daze.

"Good evening, suh," said the General, turning sharply upon him. "Tha'h's the do'. Get out!"

Mr. Marblemore turned away, passing his hand over his ample forehead, and without another word went out. The General strode up and down the room for a time seething with anger, casting many furtive glances at his stalwart companion, who sat frowning prodigiously.

"Well, boy!" he said, presently. "What have you to say?"

'Oh, it was a shame!" cried Sherman, starting up indignantly. "A shame to speak to him that way! You had no right, no reason, no provocation to attack Mr. Marblemore at all, General, and you know it."

"Right—reason—provocation! You know nothing about it, suh. The man is abho'rent to me pe'sonally—pe'sonally, suh! Is not that right—reason—provocation enough?"

"No, it isn't."

"He called me obstinate. Isn't that provocation enough?"

"No, General," replied Sherman calmly. "You *are* obstinate you know."

"Well, boy," said the General in high good humor once more. "I choose to assume the right without reason or provocation. I despise the man; he is too proud by half, and his pride is the wo'st kind of pride—the pride of pu'se of money, of arrogant, overbea'ing wealth."

"We've made a powerful enemy," said Sherman gravely.

"Bah! You irritate me, suh! I've been making enemies all my life! I thrive on it, suh!"

And the grim old warrior, lighting a fresh cigar, sat down and wrote a thundering tirade against the street railway and its promoters, in the course of which he took occas-

ion to direct the disinterested attention of his readers to Marblemore's career, which he reviewed at length, calling special attention to the number of favors he had asked and received of the city; questioning his methods of procuring the various franchises which he controlled, and charging him in the plainest terms with corruption and bribery.

"Will you come out to headqua'ters tonight, boy?" asked the General along towards evening.

"With pleasure, General, only I'll have to ask Aunt Sadie."

"I know that, boy; I know that. You are tied to her apron strings fo' all time I suppose—a-good-fo'-nothing young puppy."

Sherman laughingly denied the imputation, protesting in the same breath that he desired no better fate than to be forever bound to good Aunt Sadie. The General pooh-poohed the notion and in great good humor prepared for home.

"Daniel, you black rascal, my hat, my cane," he cried to his black attendant. "Now run on ahead and tell Benjy to meet us with the ca'iage. Take the exchanges. Be quick or I'll cane you within an inch of yo' life. Now, he'll run until he's out of sight," growled the old warrior as Daniel made off with every evidence of desperate haste; "and then he'll drop into a snail's pace. Wo'thless scoundrel! I couldn't get ten dollars fo' that boy if I tried."

Sherman broke into a shout of laughter. Though well used to the General's way of referring to Daniel as a chattel or personal possession to be disposed off at will, he never could resist the humor of it all.

"What are you laughing at, suh?" demanded the General fiercely.

"Nothing, General; nothing at all," replied the boy, still laughing uproariously.

"Then you are easily amused, suh!" said the old warrior shouldering his cane and marching out.

They were in the outer office on the way to the street when the door opened amid a chorus of feminine shrieks to admit an exceedingly pretty girl who came forward mod-

estly and in the most engaging manner offered her cheek to the General.

"Why, little Dimples!" cried the old man, regarding her fondly. "Did you wish to speak to me, my dear?"

"I only stopped in in passing, General," replied the pretty visitor dimpling rosily.

"Don't forget me, Rosie," cried Sherman, bending down as if in emulation of the General's gallant example, he would impress a kiss upon the pretty cheek.

Rosie drew back blushing and offered her hand instead. Sherman looked deeply disappointed.

"What, you rogue!" cried the General, tugging delightedly at his imperial. "Not content with golden youth you would usurp the prerogative of the grandsire. Fo' shame, suh!"

Sherman, however, did not look in the least ashamed.

"Myrtle is coming home on Saturday, Rosie," he said, smiling; "and Elmer, too, I understand."

"I'm glad," Rosie, replied with shining eyes. "Good-by, General. Give my love to Mam Sue and Carlo."

Sherman escorted her in state to the door, where half a dozen girl companions were awaiting their little friend, with whom they presently resumed their interrupted journey homeward. Sherman and the General followed more slowly.

"A glorious evening, General," said Sherman.

It was past the hour of six, and the street was alive with people hurrying homeward from the day's work. One and all made way for the General, who marched with military erectness, his cane carried across his shoulder, pointing to the sky. Sherman's name was shouted aloud in jovial greeting on every hand, and he replied with equal heartiness, somewhat to the annoyance of General Hamilton.

"You should bear yo'self with propa' dignity in public, suh," he said, severely. "A bow is sufficient to acknowledge the greeting of these good people. No gentleman, suh, should pu'mit himself to exchange badinage with his infu'iohs as you are constantly doing."

"Nonsense, General," replied Sherman, vigorously. "These people are my friends, and in every way my peers."

"Faugh! I'm ashamed of you, suh, upon the honah of a gentleman."

Sherman laughed good-naturedly. He knew his old friend's foibles too well to seek to contend with him upon this subject. An aristocrat of aristocrats, the General considered all these good folk immeasurably beneath him, and he never let slip an opportunity to impress the fact upon such as crossed his path.

"What a monstrosity!" he exclaimed, passing the Marblemore mansion. "It is like the man, vulgah, crass,—a very monument of stupidity. Truly, Mistress Marblemore is to be pitied. To live in such a house with such a man! I can imagine no wo'se fate fo' a cha'ming woman!"

"I think it rather handsome," observed Sherman. "What I hate is that kind of thing," he continued, with a nod as John and James at this moment crossed the broad veranda; "those liveried flunkies with their ridiculous kow-towing. The banker doesn't seem to realize that he has become the laughing stock of the town."

"How should he, suh? He dwells in a wo'ld of his own, and sees nothing that goes on beyond it."

"The worst of it is, he is being imitated on all sides. I wish you'd let me open up on them, General. This thing has been going on for years. What do you say, old boy, give me a free hand, will you?"

"It is useless, suh," replied the General. "Have not I turned my batteries full upon them? It availed nothing."

"I know, I know, General; but I'd go about it in a different way. A fellow can do more these days, as I'm constantly telling you, by poking fun at what is false than by thundering maledictions. It's a different generation, old friend, and, moreover, I'll have to do with women in this. Supposing I adopted the heroic strain in describing Mrs. Hammersmith's next 'soiree'—"

"You would earn the lady's etu'nal gratitude, suh."

"Very likely; but her husband, the Judge, would see it in the right light. He'd know he was being held up to ridicule, because of his wife's foolishness, don't you see, and he'd promptly put a stop to it. Come, General, what do

you say? I'm sure we could work a change in short order, and we'd certainly get a bushel of fun out of it."

"The fact is, boy," replied the General, smiling, "I can see no real ha'm in it all. If it pleases these good dames to ape in a small way the manners of the fashionable rich, why should you inte'fere?"

"In moderation, General, it is no harm, I grant; but they needn't make themselves ridiculous," urged Sherman.

"Yo' ideas and mine of what constitutes the propa' social obsu'vances, suh, differ widely. Why shouldn't these good people, being prosperous, erect go'geous mansions and fill them with su'vants? Why shouldn't they keep ca'iages, hold receptions, give pa'ties, balls and what not? True, it is all rather grotesque at present, because of the all pu'vading crudeness, but the practice of these affairs is bound in time to wo'k great good. In the beginning I was opposed to it, I own, but I've come to take a philosophical view of it, and, in fact, have come to enjoy the spectacle. Let them alone, boy; let them alone. Has not Aunt Sadie a butler?"

"Oh, Franklin!" cried Sherman, laughing. "He's a perpetual joy to Aunt Sadie. I'm not objecting to butlers, General; it's the underlying falseness—the ridiculous pretense that shames and enrages me, and I'm determined to put a stop to it."

"Well, well," responded the General, tolerantly. "I have no objections if you do not insist on making my jo'nal the champion of the old so'did life. Here we are. I'll go in with you and pay my respects to Mistress Sadie."

The Watterson homestead stood surrounded by many giant oaks in the center of a vast lawn, which stretched away on all sides. It was a huge brick structure, old and grey and ivy grown. By contrast with the palatial mansions surrounding it, it looked old-fashioned enough with its unpretentious front and square-slated roof, but there was about it a snug, homelike atmosphere, which the modern and more imposing houses lacked.

Sherman and the General made their way up the broad gravel walk approaching the main entrance, composed of doors of solid oak, sheltered by a very midget of a porch. They were met at the door by a stately lady, Aunt Sadie in

person, who greeted them in melting tones, giving both her hands to the General, who bent and kissed them in courtly fashion. A beautiful woman in the very prime of life, tall, robust, with smiling brown eyes and the color of a rose, Aunt Sadie, as she stood enframed in the doorway, beautifully gowned in shimmering grey satin, looked the personification of all that is sweet and womanly in a woman.

"Won't you come in, General?" she asked, retreating into the hall and thence into the parlor, with Sherman following after.

The General made his way more slowly, smiling to himself a little, and arrived to find the good lady seated in a great rocker, looking exceedingly flushed and somewhat tousled about the hair. Sherman stood by her side, holding one of her hands.

"Look at her, General," cried the boy, ardently. "The most beautiful woman in all the world!"

"Goodness me!" cried Aunt Sadie, laughing; "he doesn't mean it, General; he doesn't mean it at all."

"Oh, but I do. The General and I have settled it long ago. You are the most beautiful woman in all the world."

"My, gracious me!" gasped Aunt Sadie, patting her hair in great confusion. "You mustn't say that, darling."

"Yo' boy is going to spend the evening at headqua'ters, Mistress Sadie," said the General. "With yo' kind pu'mission, madam," he added, bowing with his hand on his heart.

A heart-stricken "Oh!" escaped Aunt Sadie, though she hastily put up her hand to smother the little sound.

"But, of course, you shall have him, General," she said, quickly.

"I am sorry to take him from you, madam, but it is now or never, as you cannot fail to see. When Myrtle retu'ns it will be all up with me."

The thought so tickled Aunt Sadie that she forthwith went off into a spasm of delighted laughter.

"Indeed, yes, General, indeed, yes," she cried, when at last she could speak. "My boy loves her dearly; do you not, my darling?"

Sherman hugged the smiling lady by way of reply, and patted her cheek with a gentle hand.

"And she loves my boy," continued Aunt Sadie, nodding with a knowing air. "We're all looking forward to the dear child's arrival. She would have returned with Clara months ago, but you know Richard's home-coming interrupted her studies. Poor Richard! However, what I say is, General," continued Aunt Sadie, settling herself firmly in her rocker, and assuming a look of much determination; "she should never have been permitted to go. College is all well enough for men, poor things, but women do not need so much education. Do not you agree with me, General?"

"I do indeed, Mistress Sadie, I do indeed," replied the General, bowing.

"Women naturally are wiser than men," continued Aunt Sadie, meditatively. "No doubt colleges were founded for that very reason—to enable men to attain woman's standard. Is that not true, General? I have always thought so."

"Not a doubt of it, madam."

"Right, Auntie, right," cried Sherman, delightedly.

"And so I think it is wrong for women to invade the colleges," pursued Aunt Sadie, with a charming pursing of the lips. "It can mean but one thing—men will be obliged to study years longer, which," concluded Aunt Sadie, shaking her head sorrowfully, "would be a pity, seeing that the sooner they leave college, the sooner they marry and settle down. No, General, the child should never have been permitted to go to college—and so I tell Winfield.

And having settled the matter to her satisfaction, Aunt Sadie gave herself a little shake and beamed like a noonday sun upon her boy.

"Of course, you will stay to supper, General?" she said, hopefully. "You do not mean to carry my boy away at once?"

"At once, madam," replied the General, inexorably. "The boy shall dine with me. Come, boy. Here comes Benjy with the carriage."

Sherman embraced his good aunt, who accompanied them to the outer door, where they parted, the good lady remaining to the last, gazing after her darling boy.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE GENERAL BECOMES REMINISCENT.

Benjy was an antiquated darkey, rather blacker in hue than the proverbial raven's wing, with a ragged grey beard and a broad fringe of snowwhite wool visible beneath the brim of an old and battered slouch hat. The carriage was a double-seated surrey, drawn by an exceedingly surly-looking pony. Sherman clambered into the seat beside the General, and Benjy touched the pony with the stub of a whip he carried. The little animal, resenting the old negro's dig, started with a jump, whirling the vehicle around with dizzying rapidity.

"Pony's feeling good, Benjy," said Sherman, genially.

Benjy spat reflectively, and half turning his shaggy grey head towards the young man, said gravely, "Spec's he am, Marse Shu'm', spec's he am, sah."

"Feeling his oats, eh, Benjy?"

Benjy looked at him out of the corner of one eye and surveyed the pony out of the corner of the other, and gravely replied: "Spec's he am, Marse Shu'm'."

"The General is thinking seriously of selling Daniel, Benjy," continued the mischievous youngster.

Benjy turned himself a little further around and cocked his eye at the General.

"Likely boy, Marse Dave," said he; "likely boy, sah."

"Not wu'th his salt," growled the General.

Again Benjy cocked his eye at him, then gravely shook his head.

"Purty young, Marse Dave; purty young, sah," he said.

"He'll get ovah that," replied the General.

Benjy pushed his hat to one side, until it hung precariously over one ear and eye, and gravely scratched his woolly head while considering this answer.

"Spec's he will, Marse Dave," he said, grinning widely. "Yah! Yah! Yah! Spec's he will, sah! Mus' tell Mam Sue

dat. Yah! Yah! Spec's he will get obah it. Lawd Gawd! Yah! Yah! Yah!"

Benjy so shook with discordant laughter that he almost rolled out of the surrey into the narrowing road. Sherman roared lustily, for the sight of the old darkey's glistening little eyes and wide open mouth, showing two or three yellow stumps of teeth; was irresistible. The General, too, relaxed, and became positively genial.

"How old are you, Benjy?" he asked.

"Bawn same day as Marse Dave," replied Benjy, with unusual promptness. "Mah mammy nussed Marse Dave an' me same time."

"So she did, Benjy," said the General, softly. "So she did, old friend." He put out his hand and patted the old darkey on the shoulder. "We're getting old, Benjy," he said. "We'll soon have to make way fo' the young fellows."

"Not for a good long time, General," said Sherman, preparing to alight, as Benjy brought the pony to a standstill in front of the General's headquarters.

The house, glistening whitely through the trees and endless clumps of shrubbery, resembled an old and antiquated castle in miniature. A great dog came bounding to meet them at the gate—a handsome, thoroughbred Newfoundland. He licked the General's hand, and looked up into his face out of a pair of remarkably intelligent eyes. He received a kind word and a pat or two from his master, then turned to Sherman, and, as if recognizing in him a companion with whom he could presume on a measure of familiarity, he reared himself up and placed his great paws on the young man's breast, lolling out his tongue, in what seemed a wide grin of welcome.

"Down, Ca'lo, down," commanded the General.

"Never mind, Carlo," said Sherman, gayly. "We understand each other, don't we, old boy?"

Holding the animal's enormous paws in one hand, he assisted Carlo in taking a few awkward steps toward the house, which evidence of friendly companionship so delighted Carlo that, when released, he bounded away, describing the circle of the house and yard like lightning.

"Welcome to headqua'te's, Sherman," said the General,

turning up on the wide veranda and holding out his hand cordially.

They went into the house preceded by majestic Carlo, and were met on the threshold by an old negress, whose shining fat face was folded up into a thousand wrinkles, each and every wrinkle a glowing smile. She wore a red handkerchief bound around her head, and waddled along, fat and quivering, like an animated feather-bed.

"Lawd Gawd! Marse Dave," was her greeting. "Has yo' fetched Marse Shu'm'? I decla' to de Lawd dey is not a single ting to eat in de liben house! I decla' to de Lawd, dey isn't."

"Come, now, Mam Sue," said the General, smiling. "Nothing at all?"

"Nope, Marse Dave, nope," said Mam Sue, shaking her head very firmly, but smiling all the time.

"Mam Sue has the finest dinner waiting for us, General," asserted Sherman, smiling, "that we ever sat down to."

"Go 'way, Marse Shu'm', shouted Mam Sue, doubling up with a shriek of laughter. "Go 'way, sah."

She waddled away, still laughing and chuckling, and Sherman seated himself in a comfortable armchair opposite the General, and prepared to await Mam Sue's pleasure.

There was an air of old-fashioned comfort about the house that made him long to stretch his legs in luxurious ease. The rooms were large and lofty, and most comfortably arranged with wide double doors opening into each other, all draped in thick portieres, looped back for convenience of passage. They were furnished with a simplicity that was almost primitive. The floors were uncarpeted, but painted a brownish color. There were wide fireplaces in the walls, and here and there was placed a roomy armchair or a table, but there was nothing superfluous, nothing out of place. The windows were wide and high, with small panes of glass and deep embrasures, all curtained in snowy lace and glittering with neatness. Various pictures, the portraits of eminent Southern commanders of the war, adorned the walls, but even these were plainly framed, simple and unostentatious.

Daniel came in as soon as the General had seated him-

self with his guest. He bore a small tray, upon which was placed a long-necked bottle and glasses.

"Help yo'self, boy," said the General, setting an example.

They drank, then rose, for Mam Sue's black face was shining like a sun, between the portieres leading into the dining room.

The dining table was laid for two. The General waved his guest to a seat opposite his own across the snowy board, and Benjy, arrayed in glossy black, with an immense expanse of snowy shirtfront, solemnly began his office by carrying a covered dish from a neighboring sideboard and placing it at the General's hand.

"Ah, Mam Sue," said Sherman, gayly, shaking his finger at the shining black face he saw peeping in at the kitchen door. A half-suppressed shriek of laughter answered him as he fell to.

"Mam Sue was prepared fo' you, you see," said the General, genially.

"She's a jewel, General, a treasure beyond all price. I shall entice her away from you when I go to housekeeping, I give you fair warning."

A second shriek from the kitchen told him that Mam Sue had overheard his bold declaration.

The General, with true hospitality, neither pressed his guest with unwelcome zeal, nor neglected him, but contented himself with setting a noble example, and Sherman ate heartily of Mam Sue's preparation. There were fried chicken, sweet potatoes, cornbread and beat biscuits. There were various vegetables, served as no one in the world but Mam Sue could serve them; there were delicacies of which Sherman knew not half the names nor the ingredients, save that corn played a very large part in them. Given plenty of cornmeal and lard and honey, Mam Sue could do things undreamed of by a northern cook. She was a genius in the line of cooking, and she knew it, and gloried in her skill and reveled in the praises of the General's guests.

"As I have often said, General, and shall often say again, no doubt, if this is Southern cooking, then Northerners know not how to live," thus spoke Sherman, again and

again renewing his attack upon Mam Sue's delicacies. The General, well pleased with the boy's praises, relaxed into beaming smiles, and Mam Sue behind the kitchen door chuckled and cast loving glances at the handsome profile of her master's appreciative guest.

Benjy attended them with a gravity and decorum amounting to solemnity, and when he had placed the coffee upon the table, he brought a box of cigars, then disappeared into the kitchen.

"You have taken to smoking, I see," said the General, approvingly, "and are not afraid of a glass of good old wine. Come, come, that's something; thah's hope for you yet. Benjy, a bottle of wine. I daresay I shall never succeed in making a reprobate of you, howevah."

Sherman's strictly moral life and temperate habits furnished the General with unending amusement. He was forever poking fun at him, calling him a woman, a milksop and what not, seeking in many ways to tempt him a step aside from the path of virtue, which, in his professed opinion, was unworthy a man. But he was secretly proud of the boy, and it would, without doubt, have grieved him sorely had Sherman taken that step to which a less strong and firm character would have been driven by his blistering gibes and endless mockery.

"You remind me very much of a young friend I had years ago. He was a Vu'ginian bawn and bred like myself —a Mo'ton belonging to the Mo'tons, originally from Maryland, and connected with the Kimbalts of that State, though remotely—the very best stock. Gawge Mo'ton was one of the quietest and gentlest young gentlemen in the State. He drank no wine, nevah touched ca'ds, cared nothing fo' ho'sses, and seemed to shrink from the society of ladies—in a word, a pu'fect ancho'ite. He was a bookworm, fond of writing poetry and essays on religious subjects. Being rich and handsome, and connected by blood with the very best families, he was natchally much sought aftah, but he very rarely accepted any of the numerous invitations showered upon him. Howevah, one day he went in my company to an affa'h given by the Livingstons—one of the oldest and wealthiest families in Vu'ginia. General Henry V. Living-

ston, our host, a gentleman who had attained the age of ninety years, had fought with Washington, suh, a man of fine appearance and of military bearing, as became his training, and a great favo'ite with the ladies, suh. It was afta' the affa'h and while in my company that my gentle friend Mo'ton was taunted by the younga' Elbridge, second son of Colonel Thomas P. Elbridge, one time Governo' of Vu'ginia, and a direct descendant of the John Elbridge, who signed the Declaration of Independence. He insulted my young friend, suh, taunting him with his seclusion and calling him, in effect, a milksop. He was in drink at the time, suh, but that was no excuse foh his conduct, suh. Gawge sent him a challenge, suh, as was natchal and propa'. I was his second, and young John Bolton, son of Eli Bolton, of Gawgia, and a visitor at the time in Richmond, acted foh the younga' Elbridge. The weapons were pistols, distance, ten paces, time, dawn. They met, and the younga' Elbridge fell mo'tally wounded. He died an hour afta' the meeting, suh! Died like a gentleman reconciled to his hono'able advu'sary."

The General poured a glass of wine, replenished the glass of his guest, and leisurely selecting a cigar, lit it and sat back puffing away with an air of great enjoyment. Sherman sat in horrified silence.

"That seemed to be the tu'ning point in Gawge's career," continued the General, sadly. "He took to drinking, suh, to playing, to racing and to duelling. He became a frequenta' of questionable society. His old-time friends gradually fell away from him until but one remained. He probably thought that he could refo'm the lad, and he took it very much to ha'ht because he did not succeed in tu'ning his friend from his evil co'ses befo' the end came. Po' Gawge was shot and killed at a subsequent meeting, his adve'sary being none otha than young Bolton, the gentleman who had acted as the younga' Elbridge's second on the occasion of Mo'ton's first meeting. Very sad."

"How long ago was this, General?" asked Sherman, after a moment of ruminating silence.

"In the early fo'ties, suh—twenty years befo' the wah —befo' those blue-bellied robbers came down and ruined our

homes and destroyed our peace and happiness, suh! I was then about yo' age, and I may say it now, a great favo'ite with the ladies, suh. Yes, the ladies looked very kindly upon yo' battered old friend in those dear old days," he said, a smile of delight lighting up his rugged features.

"They do now, General."

"Bah! I am old, suh, old and worn. I have nearly completed the allotted span of human life, and the favo's which the angels bestow upon me now are of the kind that children showah upon the grandfathah. Yes, suh, I realize my age, and know that nothing can compensate for glowing youth such as you possess, you handsome rascal. This world is foh the young, suh, and quite right. Those bowed in years should be content to stand aside and look on."

"Tell me about those old days, General. Tell me about the young ladies you loved and who loved you. Come, dear old boy, tell me."

"No, suh. I might tell you of those whom I loved, as I have often told you of one, but no gentleman mentions in idle conve'sation the name of her who has honohed him with her favah, suh. You never speak to me of Myrtle, boy."

It had never occurred to Sherman before, but it was certainly true that the name so constantly in his thoughts rarely passed his lips. She who bore it was in his eyes too sacred for ordinary converse.

Daniel came in, bearing a large lamp, but the General waved him away. The rays of the moon, high in the heavens, streamed broadly into the dining room where the two men sat with the table between them. Daniel had long ago removed the dishes and replaced the crumpled cloth with another of richly embroidered material, placing the cigars and decanter exactly between his master and the guest.

"Did you ever have a meeting, General—a duel, I mean?" asked Sherman, presently.

"A dozen, suh."

"The deuce! I didn't know that duelling prevailed to such an extent in the forties."

"Bah! One man may have a sco' of meetings in a twelve-month when anothah quite as courageous passes un-

scathed through life with fighting all around him. It is all temperament. I was a wild youth. I lost my mothah in my infancy and grew up wild and unregarded. My fathah rathah encouraged me in my excesses until I got beyond his control, then he unreasonably enough turned from me in angah. I had little schooling. I spent my time with companions as wild as myself in hunting, playing, racing and carousing. I had plenty of money. Through my mothah I inherited an independent fo'tune. I had nothing to do but pu'sue my own wild co'ses. I spent the most of my time in Richmond—Richmond, Vu'ginia, suh. Ah, those wa'h happy days! The flower of Southern youth and beauty was gathered in that glorious old capital, suh."

The General paused and smiled in musing delight as the scenes amid which he had passed his youth recurred to his memory. He cast aside his half-smoked cigar and sat with his legs crossed and his arm resting on the table, a glass half filled with wine in his hand.

"Tell me about it, General."

"What shall I tell you, suh? Wha'h shall I begin?"

"Well, tell me about a meeting—your first meeting."

"It was with one who had been my friend and boon companion—Henry Hamlin Gawden. He was connected with the Lees, suh—the Lees of Vu'ginia, although bawn and bred in Mississippi, whither his family had emigrated in the twenties. I met him at the capital, and finding him a handsome, refined, cou'ageous and high-minded gentleman, not above having a fling now and then, we soon became fast friends and inseparable companions. Our friendship was so close and strong, and we wa'h so constantly together that we came to be spoken of as Damon and Pythias, suh, and no one thought of inviting the one without including the other, and we wa'h welcome everywha'h.'"

"Then how did you come to quarrel, General?" asked Sherman, in some impatience.

"It was ovah a woman, suh—a player, as we called them, with whom we both fell violently in love. Gawden presumed to call her honah into question. We had pu'sued our quest in pu'fect amiableness of spirit. Our rivalry only strengthened our friendship. We agreed the one that won

the lady's favah should enjoy it, but when Gawden saw that I and not he was the favahed one, he fo'got his agreement, and in my presence presumed to call the lady's honah into question, saying that her favahs wa'h divided between myself and another whom he mentioned, offering at the same time to prove the truth of his assu'tions. Natchally incensed at a statement so inju'ious to the lady in question, I gave him the lie and—well, a meeting was arranged. We wa'h both wounded, suh; mine proved nearly fatal, but we both recovered and shook hands at our next meeting like gentlemen."

"Duelling is, in my opinion, ridiculous," said Sherman, "but in this instance, General, your conduct was certainly justified."

"How so, suh?"

"I mean to say that in impeaching the honor of a virtuous young lady—"

"Who said she was vu'tuous, suh?" demanded the General.

"Why—why, didn't you resent an imputation reflecting upon her honor?"

"Yes, suh, I su'tainly did, suh."

"Then, as I say, your stand was justified—if anything can justify so extreme a course."

"You don't know what you are talking about, suh. No one said that the young lady was vu'tuous. No one at the time—much less I—believed her to be so."

"Well, great Lord! What did you fight for, then?"

The General gave him a glance of deep compassion.

"You are very young, boy," he said.

"Now, look here, General Hamilton," cried Sherman, hotly, "if you fought a duel for the sake of a thing that never existed, you committed an exceedingly foolish action, sir. Rank idiocy, I call it."

"You have many things to luh'n, suh," replied the General, frowning. "No gentleman, suh, will permit another to call into question the honah of a lady who has been kind to him."

"Certainly not, General, but to fight a duel—to risk

murder and death only to repudiate a charge which, on the face of it, was true! Bah!"

"You are a No'the'noh, suh," the General replied, with infinite scorn, "and you cannot undahstand these things. Let me tell you, suh, that in consequence of that meeting, the cause of which was noised abroad, this young lady's honah was so fu'mly established that she subsequently married into one of the oldest families of the South!"

"Poor family," scoffed the irreverent youngster. "I should have thought now that such a meeting would have established her dishonor beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"You are an impudent young puppy, suh, and if I didn't love you, I'd cane you fo' yo' impudence."

Sherman laughed.

"You did quite right, General," he said, "in taking this young fellow to task. Only you shouldn't have gone so far as a duel. Now, I would have knocked him down and let it go at that."

"A gentleman, suh, never descends to ruffianism," said the General, with dignity.

"I'd rather be a ruffian for two minutes than a murderer for the rest of my life."

The General shook his head in great ill-humor.

"How men have degenerated!" he sighed.

Sherman, laughing, poured him another glass of wine and lit a fresh cigar.

"Tell me about meeting Uncle Winfield, General," he said.

"It was after the battle of Chancello'ville, as I have frequently info'med you," said the General, sipping his wine, then pausing with the glass half filled in his hand. "After our great cha'ge, following Jackson's famous flank movement, which gave to us that great victory, suh, we came around, suh, and took yo' eleventh army co'ah in the rear, suh, and went through you like the lightning of God, suh, striking terror into the ha'hts of men as brave as any that ever shouldered gun in the history of the human race, suh! Yes, suh, you have hea'd me characte'ize the Union soldiers variously, suh, but I wish to state explicitly that I do not include the brave men who took pa't in Fredericks-

bu'g and Chancello'ville in the sco'n in which I hold the entire no'the'n army. They were veterans, suh, brave men, who enlisted in the beginning of the wah from motives of patriotism as pure as ever inspired Southern breast. I call a man a cowa'd and hi'eling, suh, who stays at home when tha'h is fighting to do, who yields a deaf ear to the cry of his distressed country, suh, and then allows a bribe or bounty—call it what you will—to pu'suade him to shoot and stab his countrymen and brothers! What do you call him, boy?" cried the General, starting up with surprising agility and striding through the room waving his glass over his head in a passionate outburst of scorn and anger. "A man who will calmly sit at home, suh, until his country comes to his do' with money in one hand and a draft in the other, and who accepts the one because he cannot avoid the other —what do you call him, I say? A patriot! Faugh! I would rather clasp the hand of an alien nigga, suh, as the hand of such a man. And I tell you, boy, that the No'th sent tens of thousands of such creatchas against us, and pu'mitted them to pillage our homes and lay waste our cities!"

The General's fury, mounting high as he poured forth these words, was beyond all description. Sherman sprang up in alarm, fearful of the ever-impending apoplexy. But the General waved him away, and collecting himself, he sank into his chair and bowed his head for some few moments in silence.

"And these men are now fo' the most pa't posing as patriots and drawing pensions," continued the General. "The heroes wa'h all killed off. Yes, suh. Those men at Fredericksbu'g and Chancello'ville wa'h brave men and noble fighta's, suh. We held a range of hills at Fredericksbu'g, suh, a magnificent natchal fo't with a plain extending befo' us to the enemy and behind us to the river—beautiful. They cha'ged us across that open plain, suh, time and again, coming in the teeth of a withering fire. They dropped like wooden pins befo' our guns, suh, but they fo'med again, and again came on like devils in blue. I was a line officer then in old Early's command. We wa'h in the second line, with Ewald and the Light Brigade ahead of us,

and another line or two behind. Ah, but that was a magnificent battle! I had not the honah to pa'ticipate in Gettysburg, but I do not believe, in spite of all accounts, that it was as great a battle as that. Yo' General Humphreys, suh, was a hero. Yes, suh. And Chancello'ville occu'ed later. We came down on you then like a bolt of thunder, routing you completely. I fell early in that engagement, however, and know little about the maneuvers subsequent to Stonewall Jackson's flank movement in the woods. I fell and the battle passed over me. I fainted away from loss of blood, flowing from two bullet wounds, and awoke to see nothing but the blazing wood on my right and to hear the groans of the dying all around me. I was tah'ibly thu'sty, and I remember calling for water, and calling in vain. I must have fainted again, for what I remember next was dark night and a cooling draught of water flowing down my throat. I opened my eyes and, close to me—bending over me—I saw yo' face—yo' uncle's face, I mean, but so like yo's that I have but to look at you to recall that moment vividly. He was clad in fatigue unifo'm and was out, as I discovered later, on his own account succo'ing and relieving the afflicted. You may see by that how very like Aunt Sadie he is in natcha. While other young officers slept, this young man, whose wo'k was of the hardest, without hope of glory or advancement, was out tramping over the battlefield, cooling the pa'ched throats of enemy and friend alike. His face to me looked like the face of an angel, and I loved him from that moment. He carried me in his arms to the Union hospital and saw to it that I had immediate su'gical attendance, and in the long days that followed, he was my constant friend. I shed tears, I know, at pa'ting, when some weeks later I was exchanged and returned to my army. That was how I first met yo' uncle. After the wah we wrote each other, renewing our friendship. I found the South little to my liking. It was overrun with plunderers —our homes wa'h laid in ruins, our su'vants scattered to the fo' winds of heaven. All was ruin and desolation. Old families wa'h broken up or entirely extinct. I tu'ned my back upon it all—desu'ted my po' bleeding country because I could not bear to look upon her suffering, and came to

the smiling No'th, to my friend. In my wild career as a young blood I not only ran through my matu'nal inheritance, but so offended my fathah that he cut off all allowance from me, and fo' some years befo' the wah I was obliged to earn my living, which I did by entering the profession of jo'nalism, which required little education. A man of natchal talent, having fo'med the habit of thinking independently and possessing the knack of putting his thoughts into vigo'ous English could make his way with the pen easily enough. The wah reconciled me to my fathah, suh, who fell upon the field of battle a grey-headed, noble old man."

"Have you ever been South, General, since the war?" asked Sherman.

"No, suh. Nor shall I ever return. I desu'ted her, suh, in her hour of darkness, and I do not desu've ever to have my bones laid in her hallowed soil."

His voice trembled a little as he spoke these words, and Sherman fancied that his breath came almost with a sob.

"Nonsense, General," said the young man, vigorously. "You stood by her nobly in her hour of darkness. You fought for her like a loving son."

"Thank you, suh," said the old man, softly.

"Let us drink to the old South, General—the South you know and love," said Sherman.

"I do not wonder that everyone loves you, boy," said the General. "Let us drink."

They drank solemnly.

"It is time to retire," said the General, rising.

"Marse Dave," said a soft voice. They turned to find Mam Sue standing behind them smiling timidly.

"What is it, Mam Sue?" asked the General, kindly.

"Ah wants to ask Marse Shu'm' one t'ing," said Mam Sue, casting a beseeching glance at the young man.

"Go ahead, Mam Sue," said Sherman, laughing, "if I can in any way repay your excellent care of me when I came out here—"

"Go 'way, Marse Shu'm'. Go 'way, sah," said Mam Sue, bursting into a little shriek of laughter. "I want to ask yo' one t'ing, Marse Shu'm'," she continued, turning

her bright eyes and shining black face upon him. "Is yo' goin' to marry little Dimples?"

"Little Rosie," cried Sherman, a good deal astounded; "why no, Mam Sue!"

"Oh, Ah's sorry," said Mam Sue, in a tone of keen regret. "Ah's so sorry."

She waddled away, shaking her head mournfully.

"What does she mean?" asked Sherman.

"Dimples is her pet," replied the General. "She is the one white child who has ever loved or pu'mitted Mam Sue to love her. A little white girl to love is almost a necessity to a woman reared as Mam Sue has been. The Rosewoods wa'h our close neighbors during Rosie's earlier childhood, and Rosie spent whole days with Mam Sue, and Mam Sue loves her better than her own child. She rega'ds you with a favo'ble eye, and with yo' madcap elopement in mind, she has always thought since that you two would some day make a match of it. So, she is natch'ally disappointed to learn that you are not going to marry her little pet. But come, you must be tired. You know yo' room, and Daniel will attend you'. Good night, boy."

They shook hands and parted, Sherman going, under Daniel's officious directions, to his chamber above stairs and to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE REVEREND MORTIMER RINGROSE MAKES HIS APPEARANCE.

Aunt Sadie, like other good women, had her little conceits and vanities. She took a fine pride in her pretty color, for example, in her superb figure and luxuriant hair; and very likely experienced her moments of demure glory in triumphing over her neighbors in matters of personal adornment. She was as individual in attire as in person. Though invariably clothed in sober hues, each new gown, in the matter of tasteful decoration, was distinct from all others. She possessed, in an eminent degree, the quality of lending a charm and grace to everything she wore. Her ample skirts gave the effect of clinging drapery and produced, as she moved with charming grace among her sisters, a frou-frouing that betrayed underlying silks and laces of immaculate purity and crispness. Every part of her attire was exactly as it should be, dainty, elegant, tasteful and precise, and she carried herself with an air of calm confidence born of an assured conviction in its irreproachable character.

On this particular Sunday morning, as Aunt Sadie, leaning on her boy's stalwart arm, moved sedately up the aisle of the beautiful new church in the wake of her brother and his daughter, she looked particularly demure and innocently unconscious of the pretty hat she wore. Doubtless she was aware of Mrs. Delaware's flashing glasses, of Mrs. Hammersmith's reluctant admiration, of Mrs. Bennett's disgust and of Mrs. Thompson's dismay; doubtless, I say, she marked the general stir created by her entrance; but if so, she gave no outward sign of internal glee, nor by so much as a glance betrayed the gratification which so distinct a triumph inspired. She wore her usual bright smile; her glance, as it swept around the church, flashed kindness and good-will everywhere. She pressed her boy's arm proudly, and by a swift glance aside, seemed to invite the attention riveted upon her to his magnificence.

"Look at my boy, good friends," her eyes said. "Do not notice me. Look at my boy, my sweet, beautiful boy. Is not he grand? Is he not handsome? The image of his uncle, my dear, good brother, and like his father in heart, gay and saucy, but oh, so loving and lovable! Do look at him, dear friends."

Her own eyes became warm with tenderness when they dwelt on him. And so they proceeded up the wide aisle a step or two behind Myrtle and Mr. Watterson, until, arriving at their own particular corner, they merged into the waiting throng of worshippers.

The church was rapidly filling with handsomely gowned women and their glossy escorts. It was the first church in the city in point of wealth and fashionable attendance, standing in the heart of the aristocratic district, a beautiful and costly edifice, built of white stone, with twin steeples tapering towards the skies and a grand sweep of steps between. It was newly erected and newly inaugurated with new furnishings within, and a brand new pastor who, on the morning of our attendance, entered the brand new pulpit for the third or fourth time.

The Reverend Mortimer Ringrose, though extremely new, was already very popular with his congregation, especially with the feminine part thereof. He was in the first place an exceedingly handsome man, having the face of an angel, as Aunt Sadie frequently observed, which, indeed, was true, if the angel of the good lady's imagination wore a short rippling beard of inky blackness and thick, wavy hair of the same glossy hue, and a complexion of wax-like whiteness, with the faintest possible tinge of rose underlying and glowing through it. Angels, no doubt, too, have large melancholy eyes and teeth of dazzling purity and hands as white as hands can possibly be, for all these his reverence possessed. And in addition, a fine figure, with broad shoulders, a slender waist and sturdy underpinning. He was a little above the medium height of men and was perhaps thirty-five or six years of age.

Naturally such a paragon of manly beauty was adored by the good sisters, who argued, no doubt justly, that a vessel so consummate without could not but be perfect

within, which seeming assumption satisfied the old, and was not needed by the young. But the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose had more to recommend him than his looks. He was an orator of no mean ability, a singer of quality, a brilliant conversationalist and a man of many worldly accomplishments. He was a married man, a fact which brought forth many a sigh from many a fair sister in his flock.

If the male members of his congregation did not look upon the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose with quite the same degree of devout reverence which he attained in the eyes of the good sisters, they nevertheless regarded him very highly. A certain smiling good-fellowship which he displayed in his intercourse with the younger set; a certain gravity he assumed towards the older set, and a certain deference he showed towards the powerful set, won upon them all. There was no hypocrisy about the Reverend Ringrose, the younger men were wont to declare. He never quoted scripture at you! Not he! He had no moral maxims to hurl at your head. Not at all. On the contrary, he would smile indulgently at your little follies until indulgently you smiled with him. It was Human Nature, said the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose. Human Nature was weak. Human Nature was erring. Human Nature was evil. In giving way to the weakness of Human Nature you were not at fault. Human Nature was—an amazingly comfortable doctrine, and its founder was, you will agree, deservedly popular among all manner of men and women.

His entrance this morning created quite a stir. All eyes were directed at him, for he was still very new. He bowed his head for a moment in an attitude of humility and began to pray in a deep and fervent voice, standing with his white hands demurely folded, and his eyes now raised reverently to the ceiling, now lowered humbly to the floor.

He thanked the Lord for life and health during the preceding week, and for the bounties conferred upon them, His children. He besought Him to continue His care during the ensuing week, and to bestow all possible favors upon them as heretofore. He acknowledged that they were but helpless worms in His eyes, and conceded that without His

watchful hand to guide them they could accomplish nothing. He recalled to Him their efforts in behalf of the heathen, laying great stress upon the unexampled generosity of certain members of the flock over which it was his pride and joy to watch. He begged for His divine guidance in the future, reminding Him that many of those assembled beneath that humble roof had been burdened by Him with vast wealth, the possession of which imposed onerous duties and responsibilities which, without His peculiar care, would be too heavy a load to bear. And lastly, he earnestly begged His forgiveness for the weaknesses of erring Human Nature, and besought Him to strengthen Human Nature by infusing into it a portion of His Divine Spirit, so that strong and holy in spirit, they might fight the battle of life to His satisfaction, and finally enter into their reward in the kingdom of heaven.

"Let us sing," said his reverence, gently, upon conclusion of the prayer. "Let us sing number one hundred and twenty, 'I've Reached the Land of Corn and Wine.'"

Leaves began to flutter prodigiously, the beautiful roll of the organ filled the sacred edifice for one moment, and then the congregation lifted up its voice and sang, the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose accompanying with voice and hand to the end.

The song concluded, he gave out his text, which had to do with a certain journey Queen Bathsheba had undertaken and accomplished to King Solomon. The sermon that followed was not very long, nor in itself lofty or inspiring, but it was delivered with such brilliance of execution, such an uninterrupted flow of beautiful words and accompanied by such graceful gestures of the arms and movements of the body, as the preacher swayed this way and that within the narrow compass of the pulpit, that his auditors sat in a kind of spell watching him and drinking in his words—a hushed and intensely interested throng.

He began by calling their attention to the fact that it was Queen Bathsheba who had visited King Solomon, and told them to bear this in mind, as it was a fact of vast importance. He then asked why Queen Bathsheba had visited King Solomon, and proved conclusively by many

references to the Bible that it was because she wished to make him many valuable presents. Then he asked: "Why did she wish to make him many valuable presents?" and proved beyond the peradventure of a doubt that it was for the honor and glory of God. For no one could doubt that by making many valuable presents to King Solomon she was indirectly serving God by serving Solomon, who was God's servant. He told them particularly to remember that Queen Bathsheba had made the journey on the backs of camels and not on horses; and, pausing long enough to inquire why she had used camels and not horses, he gave them to understand that she thus conferred greater honor upon King Solomon, and, consequently upon God, by using the more expensive camel in place of the insignificant horse. For it was a well-known fact, as could be easily proven by the Bible, that the greater the splendor in which you served God, the better would He be pleased.

This, in substance, divested of all superfluous verbiage and glamour, was the sermon. To any thoughtful person in that congregation, this discourse, though delivered with force and apparent sincerity, must have seemed more than trivial—absolutely farcical in its far-fetched argument and reasonless vacuity; but fascinated by the preacher's personality, his musical voice and superficial smoothness, they sat for the most part in smiling complacency.

Drawing lessons, in conclusion, his reverence brought his discourse to bear on the proper way of serving God. He drew their attention to their peculiar responsibilities, in that by virtue of their exalted station, they were looked up to by the entire city. He put it to them: How could they better serve God than by setting a noble example in every-day life to those beneath them? He exhorted them to endeavor to overcome the weaknesses of Human Nature and to combat as far as possible the errors arising out of those weaknesses.

"Human Nature is weak, we know," said his reverence, in conclusion, "weak and erring, alas! but it is God's will that we try to overcome the temptations, the trials, the tribulations that we, owing to the weakness of Human Nature, are subject to, and we can best serve God, and bene-

fit our fellow-creatures by obeying His divine will in this and in all things."

"A beautiful sermon, truly," said Mrs. Hammersmith, smiling fatly, "really Sadie, he is a treasure."

Aunt Sadie, however, looked exceedingly thoughtful. It was only during the week days when, meeting his reverence on terms of social intimacy, that he seemed to her an angel. In church on Sunday, listening to his vapid discourse, she felt vaguely uneasy and ashamed, and Winfield, she saw by his expression, shared her feeling. Mr. Winslow had sent her home a penitent, remorseful creature, but under Mr. Ringrose she felt no such remorse or penitence, only a kind of humiliation in herself and shame for him. But then Aunt Sadie's mind was not as shallow as the minds of those around her. Winfield shared her feeling; Myrtle looked grave, and Sherman scornful, but the others were smiling brightly and pressing around His Reverence who, according to old-fashioned custom, came out among them to greet his parishioners after the service. They pressed around him eagerly. Nothing could be sweeter than his smile, nothing heartier than the clasp of his hand. He went from group to group as they stood chattering, shaking hands with entire families, with substantial business men, handsome matrons, pretty girls, young men and children. The solid men generally received him heartily with just a suggestion of patronage mingling with admiring regard in their manner; the matrons with placid pride, the girls shyly, but with evident pleasure, the young men with an off-hand show of good-will; and so variable was he of expression and so mobile of feature, that he could at a moment's notice adopt his demeanor to the case in hand.

That His Reverence was not one to distinguish between poverty and wealth, witness how willingly he relinquishes wealthy Mrs. Bennett's yellow claw for the plump white hand of Mrs. Rosewood, whose poverty was well known. Nay, he lingered over her hand and looked into the pretty widow's bright arch eyes with a good deal more of warmth and friendly regard than he bestowed upon the fishy orbs of Mrs. Murly, wife of the wealthy merchant of that name. Aunt Sadie received him proudly, if a little shyly; Myrtle

with smiling composure; Mr. Watterson with his usual grave courtesy, and Sherman with scarce concealed scorn, which was not, however, intended for the Rev. Mr. Ringrose personally, but for the entire order, for which the youth, as a radical, entertained the profoundest contempt. Mr. Marblemore offered him a great red hand with the manner of a man bestowing half his fortune; but his frigidity of manner was in a measure atoned for by the warmth of Clara's greeting. Mrs. Marblemore looked at him curiously and met his fine eyes fixed in unmistakable admiration upon her face. She did not turn away her eyes, but with a slight deepening of color in her cheeks, met his proffered hand, still with that curious glance, but with something of imperious surprise added—a glance such as a queen might flash at a too audacious subject. But His Reverence met it steadily, smilingly, and her glance roved away in confusion.

Sherman was standing somewhat apart awaiting Myrtle whom he hoped to escort home, when a familiar voice struck upon his ear.

"Hello, Sherman," it said, as its owner, a tall young man, came up, holding out his hand and smiling brightly, "glad to see you."

"Ah, Elmer, back for good?"

"I guess so."

"College life agree with you?"

"Yes! Oh, so-so. Isn't that Myrtle over there?" asked Elmer, following Sherman's glance, which wandered every moment to a group formed of three or four young ladies, who stood chatting at some distance.

"Yes. You haven't met her since her return from college? But, of course not. Come on over and I'll introduce you."

The chatter ceased abruptly as the two young men approached the group, and four pairs of roguish eyes were turned interrogatively upon them.

"An old friend of ours, Myrtle," said Sherman, introducing Elmer.

"Won't you shake hands with your old tormenter,

Myrtle?" asked Elmer, holding out his hand with a winning smile.

"I'm glad to see you, Elmer," replied Myrtle, giving him her hand and smiling cordially, "I heard last evening of your return."

"I am sure these are old friends of mine," said Elmer, looking around at the smiling girls. "Speak, fair damsel; art not thou the fair Rosamund, Dame Langhorn's far-famed daughter?"

The fair Rosamund pleaded guilty amid a chorus of delighted little shrieks.

"And thou, beauteous maid," continued the droll rogue, "dost not own to the name of Daisy, daughter of the house and heart of Dayton? Speak!"

Daisy, giggling like a mad creature, surrendered her hand into his by way of confirmation.

"And little Rosie, by all that is good and beautiful!" cried Elmer, turning to the last of the four, who had shyly withdrawn behind Myrtle. "Haven't you a kind word for an old friend, Rosie?" Rosie came out from behind her friend, blushing very much, and offered him her hand.

"Sh!" whispered Daisy, "here comes Mr. Ringrose."

"Let us go," said Myrtle, placing her hand on Sherman's arm. Elmer drew the little hand he held through his arm, and followed with Rosie.

The throng of worshippers gradually thinned out. His Reverence continued to the last, shaking hands and bowing, with his sweet smile flashing here and there and everywhere. The Wattersons were gone, the Thompsons, too; stout Mrs. Hammersmith, with her mild, gum-chewing husband, the Judge, and her daughters were driving away, and lastly the Marblemores went, sweeping past behind a prancing pair of bays. Mr. Ringrose stood on the steps of the church looking thoughtfully after them. When they were quite gone from his sight he clasped his hands behind him and, smiling gently to himself, proceeded slowly towards the pretty parsonage near by. He was met at the door by a thin little woman carrying a baby in her arms, with two of larger growth clinging to her skirts. She had once been pretty, no doubt, with a transient prettiness that had not survived

maternity. She was dark and small, and very slight of build.

"Was the attendance large?" she asked, wrinkling her forehead as if her soul's salvation depended upon his answer.

"Yes, quite large," he replied, avoiding her glance in the way peculiar to men who merely tolerate, but do not love, their wives.

"Baby was so sick that I couldn't come," said Mrs. Ringrose.

He snapped his fingers at the child with a show of smiling good humor.

"No harm done," he said. "Do you know the Marblemores?" he asked, presently.

"Only by sight. He seems very cold and stern."

"He is," he replied, frowning. "And she?"

"She has been away. She returned a few days ago."

He said no more. There was about him an air of coldness and reserve while conversing with her that more plainly than ever emphasized his toleration and lack of regard. She did not seem to notice this, however, but full of maternal worries and cares, she began an endless, aimless account of baby's ailments and her treatment of them, to all of which he listened with ill-concealed impatience.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH AUNT SADIE GIVES A DINNER.

Elmer had taken possession of little Rosie, and Myrtle had placed her hand on Sherman's arm quite as a matter of course, and thus walking arm in arm, they left the church in the wake of the throng of worshippers.

"You must stop for dinner, Elmer," Myrtle turned around to say. "I promised Aunt Sadie to bring you."

"The usual Sunday dinner, eh?" replied Elmer, smiling, "I'm with you."

It was a beautiful day. The sky was clear; the heat of the sun was tempered by a refreshing breeze, which came sweeping in soft waves from the south. The tender green foliage rustled and whispered overhead, and the birds, darting in and out, piped their joyous lays as it were, in emulation of the sunshine and the flowers.

"What a beautiful day!" said Myrtle, drawing in a deep breath of delight.

Sherman did not reply, but gazed down into her eyes as proudly as if he owned them.

"Is not the day beautiful, Sherman?" asked Myrtle, demurely.

"Very beautiful," he replied, but his gaze was bent persistently downward.

"Do look, Sherman."

"I am looking, darling."

"At the sky, I mean," cried Myrtle, laughing.

"It is reflected in your eyes," replied Sherman.

"Oh!" Myrtle shook her head in gentle disapproval. "I'm glad to be at home again," she added, squeezing his arm and dancing in bouyant delight.

"Are you, Myrtle? Why?"

"Because of my distinguished cousin, of course!" said the girl, mockingly.

"*Are* you glad on my account, Myrtle?" asked the young man, softly.

"Of course, and Papa's and Aunt Sadie's and oh, on everybody's account," replied Myrtle, laughing at his look of disappointment. Glancing around at Rosie and her handsome escort, she whispered, "Isn't she pretty, Sherman? And don't they look lovely together?"

Sherman agreed fervently, though he did not take the trouble to look around. Myrtle shook him playfully by the arm, and bounded onward with that elastic step, which is given only to maidens blessed with light spirits and abounding health.

Rosie, following demurely behind, with one little ungloved hand resting lightly on her stalwart companion's arm, did indeed look pretty, and Elmer was the very picture of a gallant, dashing lover, such as young girls love to dream about in waking and in sleeping hours. His voice was very gentle and low when he spoke to her; his eyes were tender, his smile wondrously sweet. Rosie's heart fluttered strangely as she walked along, keeping time with the cherry colored ribbons in her pretty pink and white gown, which streamed quite gaily to the breeze.

"It is two years since I saw you last, Rosie," Elmer was saying.

Why, so it was! He had returned but once for a brief visit during his four years at college. Rosie remembered his coming, and how kind he had been to her, and with a rising throb she recalled her sadness when he went away.

"How long it seems. Doesn't it seem long, Rosie?"

"Why no! That is not so *very* long." Rosie was quite confused.

"Do you remember the old days, Rosie?" continued Elmer. "What a little madcap you were! And what fun we used to have!"

"You used to tease me dreadfully," said Rosie, dimpling suddenly, and giving him a momentary glimpse of her pretty, dark eyes.

"You liked it, though."

Rosie was not at all sure.

"Oh, but you did!" cried Elmer. "You were such a cunning little thing."

"Myrtle was dreadfully afraid of you in those days," said Rosie.

"Was she?" replied Elmer, gazing thoughtfully at the tall, slim girl, walking some paces ahead of them. "I believe she was. I was awfully mean then. When did she return?"

"Only yesterday. Isn't she sweet? Aunt Sadie is *so* proud of her."

Myrtle turned around at this moment.

"Are you coming in, Elmer?" she asked, coming to a pause before the old, gray, ivy-grown mansion. "You will meet lots of old friends," continued the young lady, turning in upon the broad walk. "Isn't it nice to be at home again. You will come, of course, Rosie? The General will be here and he will be so disappointed if his little Dimples isn't here to meet him."

Rosie demurely acquiesced, and still gallantly escorted by Elmer, followed Myrtle and Sherman up the broad walk into the house.

There were many guests in the great parlor, staid matrons, pretty girls, solid business and professional men come to partake of Aunt Sadie's hospitality; and there was Aunt Sadie herself, bustling about with prodigious energy, but finding time in the midst of her hurry to greet Elmer and Rosie, and smile upon her boy.

"You have come home for good now, Elmer?" she said, beaming upon him. "I'm *so* glad. I'm delighted! Did you meet my boy? Do, do sit down, my dears, dinner will be ready very soon now."

She kissed little Rosie affectionately, then went bustling into the dining room, thence into the kitchen to oversee the preparations for dinner. She was in and out of the parlor every moment, looking very important and stately, but in the end, attracted by the chatter of feminine tongues about her, she plumped herself into a great rocker, in the midst of a bevy of gossiping dames, and became at once the storm center of the conversation.

General Hamilton was the last guest to arrive. Aunt Sadie greeted him cordially.

"Ah, Mistress Sadie," said the gallant old warrior, bending over her hand, "you are looking cha'ming as usual"

Aunt Sadie, smiling pleasantly, gently patted her hair.

"I attended su'vice this mo'ning, Mistress Sadie, as you commanded me."

"Commanded, General!"

"Yo' slightest wish, madam," said the old warrior, bowing, "is a command to yo' most devoted su'vant."

"Very well, General," cried Aunt Sadie, laughing.

"I hu'd yo' new minister," continued the General, "and all I can say is, if this mo'ning's disco'se measahes the depth of eitha his piety or his powahs, then both are exceedingly limited."

"I am so sorry, General," said Aunt Sadie, in a troubled voice, "everybody seems so pleased with him," she added, appealingly.

"Even the Majah?"

"Winfield says nothing."

"Ah!"

"Don't let us talk about it, General," said Aunt Sadie. "Have you seen, Elmer? He has returned and Mary is so proud."

"A straight, handsome lad," said the General, looking at the young man, who was talking with Rosie in a window, "but not to be compared with Sherman."

"My boy," said Aunt Sadie, proudly, "is the sweetest boy in the world."

"Boy," cried the General, and Sherman, tearing himself from Myrtle's side, came forward smiling, "were you down to the office this mo'ning, suh?"

"Yes, General; I got the last papers off before eight."

"Good. Ah, little Dimples."

The General turned to greet Rosie, who came tripping up to him, holding up her arms to embrace him.

"Well, my young reprobate," he continued, shaking hands with Elmer, who followed Rosie," you have retu'ned to plague us again, have you? If all repo'ts conce'ning yo' careah at college are to be credited, young man, you desu've a sound haw'se whipping."

"They are greatly exaggerated, General, I assure you," said Elmer, smiling.

"Ha! are they?" the General shook his head very fiercely. "Well, we'll see."

Aunt Sadie, with a word of excuse, left the group, and hurried into the dining room, while the General went in search of his host, whom he found in the adjoining study, sitting serene and smiling in the midst of a prodigious clamour of voices. Some six or seven gentlemen were gathered around the big, genial politician, and an animated discussion was in progress. Mr. Bennett was contending single-handed against them all on some more or less important question of local politics. Jolly Billy Boyle was there, as gorgeous as a sunflower, with a smile a yard wide overspreading his cherubic countenance. Then there was Mr. Bloomfield, a big, burly, bald-headed gentleman, lawyer and bachelor; Mr. Delaware, Dr. Fairfield and Mr. Harrington, a lawyer of depth and learning.

"But if Dillingham joins forces with Southgate," Mr. Bennett was saying, as the General joined the group, "it'll all be up with the regular organization."

"Who says that Dillingham will join fo'ces with Southgate?" demanded the General.

"I was speaking of possibilities, General," said Mr. Bennett, lowering his voice a trifle and turning very red.

"The'h is no such possibility, suh."

"I appeal to Mr. Watterson."

"Don't Bennett," cried Mr. Watterson, laughing, "don't appeal to me, pray."

"Dillingham, suh," cried General Hamilton, fiercely, "is to be trusted. Who da'hs to say otha'wise?"

"Not I, General," replied his host, smiling. "You shall not involve me in a quarrel, old friend."

The General brought the ragged ends of his thick mustache together beneath his obstinate chin and gave them a delighted tug.

"Southgate is very active," murmured Mr. Bennett, valorously.

"So is Satan, suh."

"And both are reaping a rich harvest," cried Billy Boyle, going off into a ripple of rollicking laughter.

"No, suh, no such luck," continued the General.

"Southgate is a fool, suh. If, instead of putting a thu'd ticket in the field, he had remained aloof in the last campaign he would have retained the sympathy of the rank and file of the Republican pa'ty; as it is he must control the regular convention, or he is done fo', suh; the pa'ty will tole'ate no such fiasco next year as the last, fo' which Southgate was responsible."

"But how can he control the regular convention unless Dillingham turns against Watterson here and joins hands with him?"

"Be silent, suh," roared the General, "you don't know what you are talking about."

"Come, Bennett," said Mr. Watterson, whose great shoulders shook with silent laughter. "It is useless to contend with the old rebel."

"Well, all I've got to say," said Bennett, doggedly, "is that unless the regular organization nominates Sagamore for Governor it stands no chance. And Dillingham is terribly down on Sagamore."

The General was preparing a thundering rejoinder when, fortunately, Aunt Sadie appeared in the doorway with a beaming smile, to announce dinner. They repaired in a body to the dining room, and gathered around the table which, in the good old phrase, groaned beneath its burden of good things.

The Wattersons were old-fashioned folk, who ate their breakfast, dinner and supper at the old-fashioned hours, morning, noon and night, placing their all before you without stint or reservation. The big-bellied soup tureen was flanked on one side by a great round of roast beef, and on the other by a savory brown capon. Dishes of vegetables were placed here and there indiscriminately. Plates stacked high with white and brown bread, cut in thick slices, shouldered glass stands of frosted cake and platters of cookies; tremendous pastries alternated with fruits and doughnuts and puddings. There was butter, fresh from the farm, great glass pitchers full of milk, honey in the comb and biscuits hot from the oven.

Mr. Watterson presided, a ruddy good-humored Goliath in his seat of state, wielding the carving knife with the dex-

terity and grace gained by long practice. Aunt Sadie, from her place at the lower end of the board, beamed like a noonday sun around at her friends. The General sat on her right and Elmer on her left, who gallantly attended to little Rosie's wants, as Sherman assiduously waited on Myrtle.

Franklyn, at a neighboring sideboard, poured the coffee, and in his stately fashion attended to the wants of all.

The guests conversed in amiable undertones on topics ranging from happenings in their little city to subjects of world-wide interest. The ladies took an active part at times, and at times sat silent, listening. Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Delaware had a thousand things to talk about, not having met since the previous evening. Mrs. Billy Boyle conversed in low tones apart with Mrs. Harrington, whose low laugh mingled frequently with the shrill cackle of that jolly soul. The old bachelors, Mr. Bloomfield and Dr. Fairfield, vied with Sherman and Elmer in gallant attentions upon the young ladies.

"Now that you have retu'ned from college, young man," said the General, addressing Elmer, "what do you propose to do?"

"Nothing much."

"What! You are going to idle? Come, boy, that will neva' do. Be a loafer? Faugh!"

"I am thinking of starting a journal in opposition to the 'Chronicle,'" said Elmer, gravely.

"No doubt, suh, you can establish a jou'nal," replied the General, frowning down the laughter called forth by Elmer's declaration, "money will do that, but it takes brains to run it, young man."

"Money will also buy brains, General."

"But if you pu'chase brains, suh, whe'h will yo' sha'h of the work come in?"

"My part will be scattering the profits, General."

"And you are excellent in yo' pa't, I unde'stand!" cried the General, chuckling. "Well, boy, enjoy yo' youth."

"I mean to," said Elmer, with a smile at Rosie, who looked down, dimpling.

"My eastern exchanges, Majah, say the President is

about to call an extra session of Congress to discuss this Cuban affa'h," said the General, after a pause.

"That is probably a mistake, General."

"And why, suh?"

"Well, there have been no developments since the close of the regular session to warrant such a step, for one thing; and, for another, the President has never shown himself over-zealous in Cuba's cause."

"You are a Republican, suh."

"Just so," replied his smiling host, "but I am first of all an American. I would not have you understand that I disapprove of the President's stand. On the contrary, I admire his sturdy, common sense and applaud his caution. A man less rugged, less strong of mind and firm of purpose would yield to popular clamor, and plunge the nation into war—which, in my opinion, would be a calamity unutterable."

The General frowned grimly, shaking his obstinate old head.

"Cuba must be liberated," he said. "Wah or no wah, it is our duty to go to the relief of the people of that unhappy island, suh."

"Diplomacy, General, will accomplish all and more than war."

"My opinion is that we'd better keep out of it entirely," said Mr. Bennett. "It's none of our business. Let Cuba take care of herself. Business conditions of the country demand—"

"Yo' opinion, suh," interrupted the General, fiercely, "is of no consequence whateva'."

"I agree with Bennett," said Elmer, pertly.

"Natchally. Puppies and fools are mentally of much the same caliba'," replied the old warrior, scathingly.

The discussion became general. Mr. Harrington sided with Mr. Watterson, agreeing that conditions in Cuba were fast becoming intolerable, and that something must be done, but that to plunge the nation into war would be both criminal and needless. Blooomfield, Billy Boyle and the General declared for war, war to the death and at once. Mr. Bennett, with Elmer, alone to assist him, was soon put to rout,

the more especially as the ladies unanimously took sides with Mr. Watterson or the General.

"War would be terrible," said Mrs. Boyle, stoutly, "but war or no war, as the General says, Cuba must be freed."

"My dear," said gentle Mrs. Harrington, "you have no children."

Aunt Sadie looked on smiling in tranquil enjoyment, until Sherman, suddenly striking into the discussion, declared for war, and with characteristic impetuosity announced his purpose in event of war of raising a company of volunteers. Whereupon Aunt Sadie became as timorous and anxious as if war were already proclaimed. Myrtle's expression, too, changed from a look of quiet interest to quick alarm, as she looked into the young man's flushed face.

"Really, General," said Aunt Sadie, entreatingly, "it is wrong to talk of anything so dreadful as war."

The General bowed and instantly withdrew from the dispute, which thereupon fell to the ground.

Dinner over, the guests departed, according to custom, to spend the remainder of the Sabbath with their families. Elmer and Rosie remained, and with Sherman and Myrtle went out upon the lawn to stroll in the shade of the trees, where, presently, the young people were joined by many others of their own age.

The General joined Mr. Watterson on the lawn and there, with his arm linked into that of his old friend, they marched slowly up and down the length of the walk, eagerly pursuing the argument begun at table.

"I tell you, Majah, it is high time that we did something to relieve the people of that unfo'tunate island."

"You are right, General," replied Mr. Watterson, "let us drive out the Spaniards and take possession immediately. Then we'll Americanize the Cubans thoroughly."

"You irritate me, suh! Americanize 'em! Does that mean that they are to be extu'minated as wa'h the unhappy Indians, suh?"

"The survival of the fittest, General," rejoined the big man, calmly.

"Release my ahm, suh!" cried the General, hotly. "If

you wa'h not so old a friend, Majah, I'd cut yo' acquaintance, suh, upon the honah of a gentleman!"

"But I am too old a friend, General," said Mr. Watterson, whose great shoulders shook with internal laughter. "Be tolerant, old friend. I have for twenty years been imploring your toleration, General."

"And fo' twenty years I have been the most tolohant man in these pa'ts, suh," said the General, hotly. "It is you who are intolohant, suh! You! It is men like you—men with brains and men of honest convictions, but with pu've'ted methods of thinking who make true progress impossible. You are intolohant of human life, suh! You talk of progress when the kind of progress you aim at means the total destruction of ignohant, savage peoples, suh!"

"The survival of the fittest, General," said Mr. Watterson, who took a great delight in arousing his leonine old friend. "True progress is impossible until the weeds of the human race are eradicated. The goal toward which we are tending is far, far in the distance."

"We can attain that goal, suh, without slaughta'ing inoffensive creatchas, who have not sufficient unda'standing to climb towa'ds it alone. The rankest weed will yield to propa' cultivation, suh, and grow in time into a beautiful flowa'. So education will enable these po' uncivilized peoples to climb along with us."

"My dear General," cried Mr. Watterson enthusiastically, "I agree with you entirely in that. That is what I have been advocating for years—education and equalization of the races. But let us begin at home, old friend. Let the Southern negro, for example, be educated up to the standard of the whites; let them compete equally with them, live on equal terms, in a word, share the rewards, the glories of life as well as its labors and its trials."

"Majah, yo' are insulting!" cried the General.

"By no means, General. That is the progress you aim at, only brought nearer home."

"Majah," said the General, impressively, "the nigra' is nigra' and he nevah will be anything but a nigra', suh; and as a nigra' he should be kept down, suh; down to the ground wha'h he belongs. To advocate nigra' education is

a crime, suh; to speak of the nigra's equality with the white man as a thing possible, even in the remote futcha' is an outrage, suh, and an insult to every white man on the face of the earth, suh."

"Then let us exterminate them," said Mr. Watterson, with a wave of his hand, implying great ruthlessness.

"No; that would be wrong, for every one of God's creatchas has a right to life in the sphere into which God called him. But keep them down, I say; keep them in tha'h places! An ass's place is in the ha'ness between the shafts, suh, su'ving the nigra'; the nigra's place is on the box, suh, holding the reins, su'ving the white man. If God had designed the ass to be the nigra's equal, suh, He wouldn't have made an ass of him but a nigra', and if He had meant to place the nigra' on a footing of equality with the white man, He would have made him the white man's equal in colla', blood and brains, suh!"

The old warrior, highly pleased with himself, withdrew him arm from that of his old friend and brought the ends of his shaggy mustache together beneath his chin and gave them a delighted tug.

"I shall answer your argument, sir, at another time," replied Mr. Watterson, majestically.

"And, why not now, Majah?" cried the General triumphantly, "why not this instant, suh?"

"Because I see Daniel approaching with the day's newspapers," said Mr. Watterson, laughing, "and I will not attempt to rival your beloved exchanges."

The General, indeed, lost all interest in the discussion, and all things else at sight of his exchanges. Hastily calling for his cane, he took from Daniel his favorite sheet and, bidding his host farewell, he proceeded leisurely homeward, followed at ten paces by his black attendant. Mr. Watterson retired into his study with various big dailies, and there continued for the next three hours, engrossed in the news of the day. His own likeness, grotesquely distorted by humorous cartoon and caricature, looked out at him from their pages; his name figured prominently in the political news of the State and in weighty editorials. The first called up a smile every now and then on his grave face; the last he

read with more or less attention, according to the degree of weight he attached to the pronouncing organ.

He was still deep in the news reports at dusk when Aunt Sadie came into the study dressed for the street.

"I'm going to see a friend or two, Winfield, my boy and I," she said, drawing on her gloves with an air of demure importance. "If Andrew and Mary come while I'm gone, tell them that I shall be back early."

She bent down and kissed him, putting her arms around his neck to give him a squeeze. She was the most affectionate of women, was Aunt Sadie; she could no more help showing her love to those about her than a beautiful flower can help diffusing its delicious fragrance on all around. So she hugged her brother and kissed him and pressed her soft cheek to his bearded one, quite as if she were starting on a journey around the world, from which she could not hope to return under eight or ten months.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE EVENING.

The Marblemores came during Aunt Sadie's absence, and shortly after Mrs. Rosewood, Rosie's mother, a pretty dark-eyed little widow, arrived. The ladies joined the young folks in the parlor, while the banker retired with Mr. Watterson into the latter's study. Elmer seated himself with little Rosie at a small round table, where they presently became deeply interested in the pictures in the family album. Myrtle, with Clara Marblemore by her side, occupied a settee in a corner between two windows. Mrs. Marblemore and Mrs. Rosewood, sitting at an adjoining table, discussed the fashions as pictured in the pages of a magazine.

"What do you think of the new minister?" asked Mrs. Rosewood, suddenly, interrupting herself in an animated description of a certain gown, she had seen that morning at church.

"He is very eloquent," replied Mrs. Marblemore.

"Oh, isn't he! He has such fine eyes and teeth. Everybody admires him."

"For his eyes and teeth?" asked the banker's lady, laughing.

"Why not," replied the little widow, "I think him very handsome."

"One does not, I imagine, much regard a minister's looks," replied Mrs. Marblemore, indifferently.

Turning the leaves of the magazine they chatted rather listlessly of the various styles portrayed there. From time to time the voices of the young ladies, sitting cosily in the corner, came to them. Clara was chattering with such animation, and Myrtle, sitting pensively by, was listening rather absently to her friend's lively discourse.

"Oh, here comes Aunt Sadie and Sherman," she cried suddenly, and rising she beckoned imperiously for Sherman to approach. Sherman approached smiling. He looked very

tall and broad and handsome as he came up with his fingers thrust negligently into the pockets of his sack coat, which he habitually wore half open, with only the lower button fastened, in swagger fashion. There was something charmingly boyish in the expression of his clear brown eyes. He bore himself with a modesty and grace that won him the liking of everybody.

"We were just talking about you," said Clara, looking up at him coquettishly.

She was always making eyes at him—a thing Sherman detested.

"I have been greatly honored," he replied, smiling, but evading her glance to look into Myrtle's pensive eyes.

She returned his gaze thoughtfully, as it were, absently. How wonderfully like her dear father he was!

"What do you suppose we were saying?" asked Clara.

"I couldn't imagine," Sherman replied, abstractedly.

"Guess!"

"Guessing is tiresome."

"Oh, you lazy giant! Make him guess, Myrtle."

"Clara was saying that you were very handsome, Sherman," said Myrtle, smiling mischievously.

Sherman's cheeks grew red, for he felt that she was laughing at him. He glanced angrily at Clara. That young lady had covered her face with her hands, and was peeping between her parted fingers at him.

"Oh, Myrtle!" she cried, "you naughty girl, I meant what we were saying just before he came in."

"Clara thinks that you are a great editor, Sherman," said Myrtle, "on the strength of a little essay of yours."

"Did you write it, Sherman?" cried Clara, opening wide her eyes, "really write it? Oh, it was grand!"

All of which was extremely distasteful to Sherman, for looking down into Myrtle's smiling eyes he felt sure that she was laughing at him. He sat down at some distance, a little sulky, and Clara went on with her chatter, glancing at him very often to assure herself of his admiring gaze. His eyes were both admiring and adoring, but they were persistently fixed upon Myrtle who, from time to time, gave him a thoughtful glance in return. Her eyes were so soft

and kind and sweet in their expression when they looked at him, and withal so beautiful in themselves that his sulkiness melted away, and he waited with intense eagerness to meet her momentary gaze so that he might express the devotion of his heart in his own. Clara's presence jarred upon him; her chatter irritated him. He had not yet outgrown his cub-hood, and consequently did not take very great pains to conceal the state of his mind towards her. But Clara paid no heed to his ungracious attitude, his little glances of displeasure, his short answers and general expression of ill-humor. Myrtle sat beside her animated companion very quiet and thoughtful, with her hands resting idly in her lap.

They were both beautiful, these two, but after a different fashion. Clara's hair was dark, coarse of fibre, thick and abundant, while Myrtle's was of a light auburn hue, very soft and silky and luxuriant. In the soft light, the difference in shading was barely perceptible, and in this one feature the two girls were alike. In all others they were as wide asunder as the poles.

Clara's beauty was of the robust kind, such as is given to folk reared on a diet of fruit and milk and vegetables, with acres of pure air to inhale and an ocean of sunshine to bathe them in. Her cheeks were round and full, and like two ripe apples of a never-varying red, which delicious color spread in a lesser degree over all her face and neck in moments of excitement or after undue exertion. Her really fine eyes were dwarfed and made smaller in appearance, as was her nose by the overfulness of her cheeks. Her mouth was sweet and tempting in repose, with full ripe lips and splendid teeth, but a smile always played about it, a wide full frank expression of her nature, but not becoming, for her cheeks did not dimple but formed into wrinkling folds, which greatly marred the beauty of the face as a whole. Her chin was strong in outline, and her forehead ample and exposed to the full.

She was tall of stature, and of robust proportions, with wide shapely hips, a full womanly bust and a waist of great natural thickness. She was a very good-natured girl, constantly smiling and laughing when with those whom she considered her social equals, but like her father, bearing her-

self coldly and haughtily in the face of the world. Clara took great pride in her athletic achievements, and spoke with glee of her triumphs in many branches of athletic sport. She was an expert swimmer, a good horsewoman, a champion of the bicycle, had won medals in running and in jumping, and was renowned for her strength of muscle and power of endurance. She was a new woman, she said, proudly, a modern maid capable of coping with tyrant man in any field, and with great physical strength and development she combined a bright, if not a brilliant mind, full to overflowing with iconoclastic theories on woman's rights and privileges.

Myrtle was taller than her smiling friend, reaching well up to gigantic Sherman's shoulders, indeed, when she stood very straight, and her figure was gracefully rounded, and firm and well proportioned. She was slender, without that look of thickness and repression so observable in her companion. Her face was pure in outline, with clear-cut features, of a large mould. Her cheeks were thin, and their thinness was greatly augmented in appearance by the immense breadth of brow above, and the strong outline of chin below. Her color was of the kind that can only be described as a pensive paleness, very clear and transparent, with now and then a faint rosy glow. Her eyes were grey in color and very large and beautiful, and as gentle in their bright and pure expression as any fawn's. Her voice, like Aunt Sadie's was clear and low and deprecating, and her smile frequent and pleasant to behold. She had a strong sense of humor this young lady, and was possessed at times by a spirit of mocking mischief, amounting to maliciousness. She had altered in one important particular during those years at college. She had acquired a certain air of calm repose that never forsook her. She was no longer shy and retiring, as in childhood, but calm and self-possessed in whatever company.

Such were the two young women sitting opposite Sherman, the one chattering and laughing and chirruping gayly, the other thoughtful and silent in the midst of her friend's animation, both casting kind glances at the indolent young fellow, and he striving eagerly to catch the glance of Myrtle,

but more often receiving Clara's full battery instead. He was obliged to look at Clara from time to time to answer her questions, but he did so with an ill grace. He liked her well enough, he told himself irritably, but he would have liked her better if she would quit bothering him. She admired Sherman greatly, that was certain. She singled him out quite openly and frankly. When they met at a ball, a party, a picnic, or at church, she came to him smiling brightly, and compelled him to talk to her, to attend upon her and to escort her home, in the end remaining persistently good-humored and smiling in spite of his sulkiness and ill-humor. Other young men crowded around the handsome, good-natured young heiress, and eagerly pressed their homage, but she turned up her nose at them all, reserving her sweetest glances and brightest smiles for this unappreciative young cub. He did not like it—he disliked it very much indeed. He was a modest young man and he writhed with fury and embarrassment and gritted his teeth beneath the merciless General's blistering gibes, when Clara coming quite openly in her carriage, sought him out at the office down town to carry him off to some afternoon affair, or merely to sit half an hour in chat with him. Whatever this young lady's faults were hypocrisy certainly was not among them. She showed her preference for him openly and proudly. She was willing to bestow her handsome person and all her riches upon this young man, and she told him so in every way short of actually proposing marriage to him.

"Sherman," Clara was leaning towards him with an expression of pleading in her eyes and puckered lips, "please don't look so cross."

"I'm not looking cross," said Sherman, in a very cross tone indeed. Myrtle persistently avoided his glance, and he felt very sulky in consequence.

"All great men are cross, Clara," said Myrtle, gravely.

Yes, she was laughing at him. Sherman became moody, not to say gloomy, at this. But chancing to glance down at her hands he saw and instantly recognized a ring she wore as one of his giving. Yes, he knew it well—a slender little band of gold with a small ruby set in a cluster

of sparkling diamonds. She had dozens of rings he knew, but she had chosen his simple gift out of all of them! And there on her breast was a little knot of flowers which he had brought that very evening! Why, what a fool he was! Why, the very watch she wore, impaled on her bosom, was a present of his! And the brooch at her throat! Good heavens, what an idiot he was! He brightened up with the thought, and Clara attributing his sudden animation to her soft glances, redoubled her smiles. But Myrtle had noticed his glance, and quickly covered the ring with her hand, manifesting a little confusion in her manner as for a moment she met his rapturous glance. The look she gave him was delicious. Sherman sprang up in pure delight, then sat down again with equal suddenness. He was not sure about the watch.

"What time is it, Myrtle?" he asked, coloring a little, for he was literally surrounded by clocks of all sizes and kinds, Aunt Sadie's collection of pretty treasures, and they were one and all ticking away with great industry.

"It's just eleven o'clock," said Clara, forestalling Myrtle quickly. She, too, had a watch, and a very pretty one, all crusted over with jewels, which flashed brilliantly in the light.

Sherman did not look at her, but kept his eager eyes fixed upon Myrtle. She had made an involuntary movement toward her watch, but let her hand fall again when Clara announced the hour.

"Please, Myrtle," said Sherman.

"It's eleven o'clock, I tell you," cried Clara, impatiently, "look at the clocks."

"Hang the clocks," replied Sherman, stubbornly. "I want to see Myrtle's watch."

Myrtle colored a little and laughed, but he had his way and he saw that it was indeed his gift to her. His picture, taken with her when a rough young cub of sixteen, was in the case, placed there by Myrtle's own hand.

"It's two minutes past eleven," said Myrtle, demurely.

"Thank you," said Sherman.

"Now he's satisfied," cried Clara, pouting. "Every-

body spoils him; and quite right, too! There comes our papas."

Mr. Watterson and Mr. Marblemore came in from the study and stood for some minutes talking together in the threshold. Myrtle threw a kiss to her father, with a little arch movement of the mouth that thrilled Sherman through and through. Her love for her father was quite as deep as of yore, but not as all-absorbing. Her eyes dwelt lovingly upon him, but she remained where she was, yielding the same abstracted attention to Clara as before. Clara, too, smiled and waved her hand at her father, whose loud, laughing voice, drowned out all other sound in the room.

"I mean it, Winfield," he was saying. "And so I told Dillingham and Sutherland. The only man I'll stand back for is Winfield S. Watterson. I said to Dillingham: 'If he says that he wants the seat, I have nothing more to say; but if not I'll go in for it and buy it out and out.' Why not? Why not do openly that which is done secretly right along? I'm above board. I say I'll give a hundred thousand dollars in cold cash to be made United States Senator from Illinois."

"Don't talk nonsense, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson, frowning.

The banker laughed, and the conversation drifted to other matters of current interest. How oddly like her father in her open candor Clara was, Sherman reflected ruefully.

As the banker approached the group formed by the three elder ladies to exchange a word of greeting with Aunt Sadie, Mrs. Marblemore arose and crossed the room towards Mr. Watterson. Her movements, as she went to meet his quiet approach, were slow and graceful. She smiled brightly up at him, and placed her small, plump, white hand on his arm.

"Are you not proud of Myrtle, Winfield?" she asked, softly.

"Very proud, Mary," the big man replied, glancing in his daughter's direction. "You, too, have cause for pride," he added, nodding towards Elmer. "A handsome lad, Mary; Clara, too, is a very beautiful young woman. Andrew has told me of his hopes in that direction."

"They will, I fear, never be realized," said Mary, shak-

ing her head. "They are not very friendly. Elmer is wild, and Clara has such strange notions. Nor is Myrtle wholly free from vagaries."

"But, are they vagaries, Mary?"

"Oh, Winfield! Do you believe in them?"

"I am not quite prepared to go so far," Mr. Watterson replied, smiling broadly.

"Whatever Mr. Watterson's daughter may advocate," said Mrs. Rosewood, who had joined them during the foregoing dialogue, "you may be sure Mr. Watterson will indorse, for never were there two such loving hearts."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Watterson, bowing.

But his tone was constrained, his glance cold when it rested on the little widow. He had lost almost all respect for Mrs. Rosewood; so persistent was her pursuit, so ardent her court of the big, handsome widower that she had become almost hateful to his sight. He turned away in evident relief in answer to his sister's voice, who called him at that moment from the other end of the room.

"It is utterly useless, Rose," said Mrs. Marblemore, with the ghost of a smile playing around her lips.

"Thank you," responded the little widow, flushing. "*You* should know."

It was now Mrs. Marblemore's turn to flush hotly. Scarlet her cheeks became; her eyes flashed ominously, but meeting the little widow's snapping eyes, she turned away without reply, and crossed the room in the regal fashion that characterized her, joining the group formed by the banker and their host and hostess. Mrs. Rosewood gazed after her with a bitter little smile, but sighed a little heart-breaking sigh as her glance again fell upon Mr. Watterson.

It was useless, she owned, and deep down in her heart she wept with mingled rage and shame, though her eyes remained tearless.

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"Whose picture is that, Rosie?" asked Elmer, softly, bending low to look into his pretty companion's shy, dark eyes.

"One of Myrtle's college friends," replied Rosie, giving him the merest flash of a glance. "Her name is Mary Wool-

worth," she added, for his further information, "Myrtle spent all of one vacation with her traveling."

"Did she, indeed?" said Elmer, abstractedly.

"Yes," said Rosie, very earnestly, "she lives in Chicago, I believe."

'And this one?"

"That is Fanny Rowland," said Rosie, looking up, "you should know her."

"So I do," said Elmer, smiling.

"She is very pretty," said Rosie, surveying the picture with her little head held very much on one side.

"I know a prettier," said Elmer, and Rosie bent lower still over the album.

She was an exceedingly pretty girl was Rosie, not very tall to be sure, but slenderly fashioned, neat and trimly rounded, with the prettiest, sweetest, rosiest face in the world. At least so Elmer thought, and many and many a young man concurred with him in thinking. She was so shy, so modest and timid that she hardly dared to raise her voice above a whisper, and rarely gave him more than half a glance at a time. Elmer was astonished at the change in her. He remembered the pert, forward little minx of their school days, and here she was retiring to an almost painful degree. The transformation was as complete as the metamorphosis in Myrtle, only it was somewhat different. Whereas Myrtle had grown from a shy, sensitive little maid into a calm, well-poised, self-possessed young woman, Rosie had developed backward as it were, passing with maturing years into that state out of which Myrtle had emerged. But the change sat well upon each. Elmer could not imagine Myrtle other than she was, and the smallest touch of pertness in Rosie would have ruined her forever in his eyes.

Her hair was so very black as to be almost blue, and arranged in a thousand cunning little waves and curls and ringlets around her pretty face. Her little nose was so cunningly wrought, her mouth so adorable in shape, her cheeks so exquisitely rounded; she had such a lovable little chin, such modest dark eyes, and such a glowing rosy color that Elmer never wearied of admiring these manifold charms, singly and collectively. Rosie still continued bravely at

Murly's, and, far from being ashamed of her position, she was proud of being one of the toilers; so she told Elmer, when he questioned her, tossing her little head defiantly. Her independence amused him greatly; he was charmed with her soft innocence and modesty.

"Rosie," said Mrs. Marblemore, taking the pretty little girl aside, when they were about to go, "you must not believe all the pretty speeches a young man makes to you."

Rosie looked up at her but did not reply.

"Do not let Elmer turn your head, I mean," continued the banker's lady.

Then Rosie looked down, blushing and almost ready to cry. "Do not misunderstand me, dear little Rosie," said Mrs. Marblemore, quickly, "I would be very, very proud and happy to have such a sweet, good little daughter, but—but—but—Rosie, Elmer is not to be trusted. He is not, Rosie!"

Rosie reared her little head proudly and looked the elder lady full in the face.

"Thank you," she said, and turned away.

Turned away coldly and proudly! Oh, foolish, foolish little Rosie! Do not turn so scornfully from her who means so well. Virtuous pride is a fine thing, a noble thing, but virtuous pride has been brought low ere now. But she heeds us not; she does not hear. He stands awaiting her at the door, handsome, smiling, a blue-eyed god, and she goes to him and places her little hand lightly upon his arm, and they go away together.

The street is brilliantly illuminated in spots, with wide stretches of deep shadow between, along which the mansions they pass look like ghostly habitations devoid of substance and reality. He can hardly feel the pressure of the little hand upon his arm. What if he places his warm palm upon it to assure himself of its presence? Surely there is no harm in that! What, if in the very deepest shadow he bends down and kisses the dear fluttering little hand? Surely, surely there can be no wrong in a caress so slight, so respectful. But yes, Rosie is sure that it is not right.

"Please don't Mr. Marblemore," said Rosie, striving to withdraw her hand.

"Mr. Marblemore, Rosie!" cried Elmer, reproachfully. "Why not Elmer?"

"It wouldn't be proper," said Rosie, shaking her pretty head.

"You used to call me so, Rosie."

"But that was ever so long ago."

"If you call me Mr. Marblemore again I shall be very angry," said Elmer.

Rosie remained silent. She relinquished her hand to him, however, and again he bent down and kissed it ever so softly. She tried to withdraw it again, but he held it firmly imprisoned, and continued to kiss it from time to time all the way home. She paused at the foot of the lawn in front of the little, white cottage.

"Good night, little Rosie," said Elmer, softly.

"Good night," Rosie replied, trying to run away, but he still held her hand, detaining her.

"Say good night, Elmer," he pleaded. "Please, Rosie."

"Good night—Elmer."

Then Rosie hurried up the walk and into the house, and Elmer, stroking his smooth chin thoughtfully, continued on down town.

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"Sherman," said Myrtle, "you must be Clara's escort home."

"Oh, Myrtle, I don't want to," said Sherman, like a little boy begging off a whipping.

"She expects it of you. Mrs. Rosewood will go home with Mr. and Mrs. Marblemore, and Clara must have an escort home."

"Why can't she go with the old folks?" said the boy, sulkily.

"You must take her Sherman."

"I will if you will promise to wait up for me. I want to say good night."

"You can say it now," said Myrtle, demurely.

"I can, if you will let me off going home with Clara."

"No, no."

"Then you will wait up for me?"

Myrtle nodded, and Sherman, with a grimace, ap-

proached Clara, and with a tolerable good grace, asked to see her home. Of course! Clara had intended nothing less. She clung to his arm very closely, and laughed up at him and chattered all the way home.

"Won't you come in, Sherman?" she asked, pausing at the foot of the grand stairway.

"Thank you, no. I'm late enough now."

"All right, Sherman, only don't be cross. You should never be cross with me."

"I don't mean to be."

"But you are. You're a big, cross giant, so you are. Do you remember, Sherman, the time you chased Elmer into the house?"

"Yes, of course."

"And—and do you remember what I did afterwards?"

"Why—er—yes," replied Sherman, feeling very ill at ease.

"I kissed you, Sherman," said Clara, in a voice wondrously low and gentle. "You were so brave."

Sherman made an impatient movement, turning away from her towards the street, but her hand still clasped his arm, and with a gentle pressure she restrained him.

"Don't be cross, Sherman," she said, beseechingly. "Look at me."

An electric light swinging at the juncture of two streets, at a short distance, shed an almost fierce light around, the outer edges of which reached them in fitful flashes through the swaying foliage of surrounding trees and shrubbery. Clara's face shone strangely pale in the fitful light, and Sherman, looking down at her bidding, was shocked to see tears trembling in her eyes.

"What are you crying for, Clara?" he said, gently. "I wouldn't cry."

"I didn't mean for you to see it," she said, turning away.

"I must go now," said Sherman, rather awkwardly. "Good night, Clara."

She still held his arm, clasped in her two hands, and with the word she slipped them down until she held his hand in both her own.

"Look, Sherman," she said, and before he realized what

she was about, she had kissed his hand. "Good night, dear Sherman."

"What did you do that for?" asked Sherman, angrily, but she was gone. He heard the door closing softly as he stood there rubbing his hand, dazed and confounded by the girl's action. Then turning away with a hearty curse on all forward damsels, he hastened homeward, and presented himself with quite a different expression of countenance to the young lady awaiting him there. Myrtle sat alone in the parlor with a book in her hand. She rose and came to meet him, smiling at his eager rapture upon beholding her.

"Well, she didn't eat you, I see," she said, looking him over critically.

"Don't let's talk about her, Myrtle," he said, taking her hand with ardor, "come and sit down."

"No, sir; bed time. You must get some sleep, else how can you compose those sublime—"

"Please don't laugh at me, Myrtle. I don't care who laughs at me or my work, if only you don't. Are they so very bad, Myrtle?"

"No, they are really very good," said Myrtle, seriously.

"Do you think so, Myrtle?" cried the youngster eagerly.

He was exceedingly proud of the two little essays which he had now come to write weekly for the editorial columns of the Chronicle. Mr. Watterson thought highly of them, the General, too, and Aunt Sadie absolutely gloried in her boy's brilliant genius. Myrtle alone had hitherto failed to yield that admiration, that homage to his intellectual qualities which the conceited young fellow secretly considered his due.

"Yes, they are very good indeed, Sherman," she said now, "I am glad to see that with much of the General's blunt style you have not adopted his old-fashioned methods. He is a dear, good old man, but logical reasoning is better than abuse, and you reason very clearly indeed. Now will that content you, sir?"

"And that has been your opinion all along?"

"Yes, all along."

"Then why, Myrtle, why do you laugh at me?"

"I laugh at the matter of your editorials, Sherman, not at you. You have such wild theories, such whimsical ideas."

"But they are the only true ones," said Sherman, with conviction.

"No doubt they are, but so foreign to prosy everyday life. Why discourse on socialism, on the coming millenium, and things so far, so very far in the distance? There are problems enough around us, my ardent Sherman, wrongs and abuses enough to keep the pens of ten thousand editors busy. Good night now, Mr. Editor. I will keep Papa company for a half hour or so; do you stop with Aunt Sadie a little while. I know she is waiting impatiently for her darling boy."

She gave him both her hands at parting, and Sherman, kneeling as to a saint, kissed them softly. This love so humble and adoring, this chivalrous homage was inexpressibly sweet to Myrtle. She allowed her hands to linger in his for a moment, and ere withdrawing them answered his ardent embrace with a soft clinging pressure that transported her lover into the seventh heaven of delight.

Mr. Watterson was sitting at his desk, still turning and returning the newspapers when Myrtle joined him. Seating herself on the broad arm of his chair she put her arms around his neck, and for a time sat in pensive silence, running her fingers through his curly mane.

"What is it, Myrtle?" asked Mr. Watterson, presently capturing one of the little hands and placing it in his own large palm, the better to admire its contrasting smallness.

"I've been thinking, Papa," replied Myrtle.

"Of what?"

"Oh, of many things. Are you glad to have me at home once more Papa?"

"Ah, my love!"

"Really glad?" continued the girl, shaking him playfully.

"Papa, who filled my room with flowers—such beautiful flowers?"

"Don't you know? Can't you guess?" cried Mr. Watterson, chuckling.

"Was it Sherman?" asked Myrtle, blushing.

"Ha, ha! The poor lad has been nearly beside himself for a month past. Now that you are here it is to be hoped that he will regain his senses."

"Dear Sherman," murmured the girl, and continued pensively smoothing back her sire's silvering locks.

"Of whom are you thinking, my love?" asked the big man, gently.

"Of Richard, Papa," she replied with tears in her eyes. "Of Richard who loved me so dearly. Was it not hard, Papa? To die so young! And his poor mother—"

"Hush, Myrtle, I would not let my mind dwell upon the past, my love."

"Sometimes I cannot help it."

"I know—I know, but—better go to bed now, my love. It's very late."

"So it is, Papa," replied Myrtle, and drying her eyes; she embraced him once more, smiling into his kind eyes with deep affection.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH MYRTLE CALLS A MEETING.

Myrtle had fitted up a corner of the library for a study. It was simply furnished, with a few plain chairs for visitors, and an enormous desk for her own use. A number of shelves, arranged around the walls, contained her books to the number of several hundred volumes. The greatest difficulty which Myrtle encountered in endeavoring to keep her study rigidly bare and business-like was the persistent invasion of Aunt Sadie's bric-a-brac. That good lady could not understand the girl's aversion to her pretty ornaments. She sought in many ways to introduce her treasures into the forbidden chamber, but for a long time without success. Myrtle carried her bits of statuary away, deposited her gilded clocks upon the library table, and her vases in the halls, laughing at her dear aunt's perseverance, but very stern and determined nevertheless.

"It is very unkind of you, Myrtle," said Aunt Sadie, coming in one morning, her arms laden with statuary, "to refuse to keep my pretty things. I really don't know where to place them all; and this room does look so ugly without them."

"But they distract my attention from my work, Auntie."

"I'm sure I don't see why you want to work," said Aunt Sadie, depositing her treasures on a convenient chair and sitting down on another. "It's all well enough to correspond with friends, and to keep housekeeping accounts, but why you should write for the newspapers and the like, I can't see."

"Can't you, Auntie?"

"I don't see what you want to make all this fuss about woman's suffrage for," continued Aunt Sadie, plaintively. "I'm sure I don't want to vote."

"But I do," declared Myrtle, nodding. "And why shouldn't you vote, Auntie? Don't you pay taxes? Aren't you intelligent enough?"

"'I suppose so," said Aunt Sadie, very doubtfully, however, "but why should women trouble their heads about such things when the men can attend to them so well? Surely we have many more important things to do. Men, poor creatures, must have some amusement, musn't they? I think it a shame that women should seek to enter a field where the men are acquitting themselves so creditably. What would you think of a woman, mistress of her own house, sweeping the floors, scouring the dishes, cleaning the windows and performing like menial work which belongs of right to her servants? Pooh! pooh! my dear! Let the men govern, I say, and let us govern the men. Men are our servants, my dear, placed here to protect us, to guard and to shield us from all dangers. They are given strength of mind and muscle that they may provide for us while we carry on Nature's great work. Why should you mingle in it? Why should you write about such things and stir up such a fuss? I'm sure I'm very proud of you, and so is Winfield, oh, so proud, and my boy loves you dearly, dearly! And why can't you be content with all this? Oh, Myrtle, don't you love my boy?" she continued, clasping her hands and gazing at Myrtle with large, inquiring eyes. "Do you love my boy, darling? And will you marry him, Myrtle?"

"I'll not tell, Auntie," said Myrtle, smiling roguishly. "I'll not say, but I'll tell you, Auntie, what I require in a lover—in a husband, if you wish."

"Do so, darling," said Aunt Sadie, settling herself in expectant delight.

"He must be brave, Auntie, and as modest as brave, for a woman may be modest and a savage brave, but in him both qualities must be equally united, so that the one may round out the other, and ennoble him who possesses them. He must be strong, Auntie, but gentle, too, else he shall not have me, for strength is a negative virtue when unaccompanied by gentleness, and gentleness without strength is unbecoming a man and my husband. Self-reliant he must be at all times; humble in my presence, but proud in the face of the world; modest in all things save in love, but in that boundless. Impulsive he may be, impetuous even—aye, headstrong—I do not care if he be only governed at bottom

by sound sense. He must be intellectually my equal, Auntie, neither above nor below me, so that I may neither stand in awe of him nor despise him. He must be pure, Auntie, and come to me as he would have me come to him. And finally he must love his country and believe in God, else I cannot trust myself into his keeping. All this, Auntie, I shall demand of him who would be my husband!"

She had risen, the better to confound her aunt, and now stood for a moment half-laughing, but with a serious look and a warning finger upraised; then courtesying low in an old-fashioned way affected by our grandmothers, she sank into her chair.

"You love my boy, Myrtle," said Aunt Sadie, with a bright smile. "You do, Myrtle, you do; for you have described him even now. Is not my boy brave, strong, gentle, modest—oh, so modest! Is not he brilliant of mind? Is not he pure, truthful, loving, and—and *good,* Myrtle? And oh, is not he handsome, darling? You have said nothing about his looks, Myrtle?"

"That, Auntie, is a last consideration."

"But you expect much, child, very, very much," said Aunt Sadie, gravely. "And what have you to give in return?"

"Myself, Auntie—my dearest love and devotion."

"Well, but, darling, I do hope you will marry my boy."

"I forgot to say, Auntie," said Myrtle, laughing, "that the first requisite—the very first—is that he must plead his own cause."

"Oh, but he will, Myrtle," Aunt Sadie cried. "He does not know that I am pleading for him; and I love him so much, Myrtle."

Myrtle came to her side and placed her arms around the dear lady's neck, and pressed her cheek to hers.

"Dearest Auntie," she said very softly, "so do I. Only —only—he is such a boy—a dear, good boy as you say, brave, and strong, and gentle, and modest, but still a boy."

"He will be a man some day, my dear," replied Aunt Sadie, nodding delightedly; "and such a man! Will you marry him then, Myrtle?"

Myrtle kissed her gently by way of reply, then return-

ing to her desk, she took up her pen with an air of great resolution.

"You must not neglect your walk, my dear," said Aunt Sadie, pausing at the door after stealthily placing her treasures in various artistic groups about the room.

"No, Auntie, Sherman will call for me this evening."

Aunt Sadie smiled knowingly, and with a last loving glance at the girl who sat pen in hand, her brows knit in deep thought, she went away.

Myrtle had at this time already won considerable repute as a writer of depth and power on various phases on the many-sided woman question. A year before her return from college her articles began to appear weekly in the columns of the Clarenceburg Chronicle, swelling by degrees from a half column in length to nearly half a page of serious discussion of the home life, business life and college life of woman. She touched upon politics, judging men and measures with remarkable clearness of comprehension. She delved into woman's past history, traced her progress and development, and by logical inference speculated on her future. She commented on the achievements of women of note; kept track of the far-reaching movements toward complete emancipation among her sex; but above and beyond all else, she persistently and energetically did battle for the ballot. The General printed the first half-dozen essays obscurely, perhaps a little ashamed of them, but they gradually crept to the most conspicuous corner of the famous editorial page and became the Chronicle's strongest feature. The young woman's name, signed in full, attracted widespread attention, especially when it became generally known that the writer was no less a personage than the daughter of the famous politician. Myrtle very shortly received a communication from the editor of a Springfield newspaper, requesting permission to publish her essays jointly with the Chronicle. It was followed by a letter from the Chicago Courier, a paper of enormous circulation, and lastly by an offer from a newspaper syndicate which brought her writings at one fell swoop to the attention of the entire country.

Myrtle was greatly astonished at the instant and pronounced success attending her first efforts, but she eagerly

seized upon these offers of a wider field for her endeavors, and continued the work so auspiciously begun with an ardor and enthusiasm worthy of the cause in which she labored. She was on the fair road to fame when she returned home to her proud father. She was an object of great admiration to her friends as a young woman of brilliant intellectual attainments, but regarded rather askance by all as one ridden by a crotchet, a fad, a hobby which would, no doubt, wear away in time, but which was to be humored while it lasted. She was taken seriously by no one, she found; not by the General, not by her father, not by Sherman even.

"You're only a woman, my dear," the General would say in a tone of commiseration; and so said every one.

The General would, indeed, argue with her by the hour, delighting in the girl's glowing enthusiasm, but the dear old man retained throughout an air of amused contempt that awakened Myrtle's utmost indignation. Her father would listen to her eager arguments smilingly, nodding his grand head in invariable assent, treating her, in short, like a beloved child or a superior kind of angel. As for Sherman—oh, he was but a boy, a hare-brained, addle-pated youth whose unripe opinions did not count, and whose faith in the justice of her cause was consequently rather irritating than otherwise. In a word, her views met with no sympathy among those for whose opinion she entertained a high regard, but her faith in the right and justice of her cause continued unshaken, and she applied herself the more, spending hours of each day at her desk, studying and writing, resolved to compel their serious consideration and their faith.

The reward came in the form of appeals from editors of high-standing periodicals, earnestly requesting contributions from her pen. She filled them all, rejoicing in the broader scope given to her powers, the wider sphere of her influence. She became known far and wide as the champion of the cause of woman, the ardent advocate of woman's suffrage. Letters came from all parts of the country, letters of praise and appreciation from earnest women striving in the same field; invitations, too, from woman clubs over the state, soliciting addresses on her favorite subject. Aunt Sadie threw up her hands in horror when Myrtle showed

her the first of these, and calmly announced her intention of accepting it. All this required time, of course. It was not accomplished in a single year, nor in two or three years; but all things considered, her progress was astonishingly rapid. The impetus given to her rise by the famous name she bore was, no doubt, great, but to sustain this rise and continue to heights undreamed of even by the ardent girl, required more than ordinary brilliance of intellect and earnest effort.

As time passed, and her success became a certainty, Myrtle began to observe an alteration in the demeanor of those about her. People came to regard her with more than smiling curiosity—with a kind of awe. To see the General shaking his obstinate head, but silenced, to observe her dear father's grave air of thought, to witness Sherman's boundless admiration and Aunt Sadie's unending astonishment—all this filled her heart with measureless joy and content. She loved the cause, and was willing to devote her life to it—not the devotion of absolute surrender, of sterile self-sacrifice. No. Her life should not be barren of woman's greatest happiness. She would, God willing, do a woman's part in the world, love, marry, and bring forth children and rear them to glorious man and womanhood; but her life-work would go on none the less. She was still young, however, and marriage was not to be thought of for years to come.

Having a well-defined idea of the methods pursued by her father in establishing his political organization, Myrtle had conceived the plan of building a monster woman's association along the same lines, of forming the nucleus of the organization among her immediate friends in the city, and of allowing it to spread throughout the State and country. She had talked the matter over with her intimates, many of whom were willing to join her in forming a club for whatever earnest purpose. She had arranged a preliminary meeting to take place at her home, and was now awaiting them in glorious anticipation. Franklin had placed a long table in the library with chairs around it to the number of a dozen.

Clara was the first to arrive, clad in the dress she

affected, a dark-colored skirt reaching barely to her ankles, and a white shirt-waist, whose abbreviated sleeves showed a fine pair of strong, round arms as brown as a berry from constant exposure to the sun. Her full, handsome throat, too, was free and unconfined by collar or ribbon, having merely a loose ruffle of lace around it. She looked remarkably cool and comfortable. Then came Rosie, the meeting having been arranged by her thoughtful friend with an eye to the little maid's half-holiday. She came in quietly, in a timid, subdued way she had, which Clara called hypocritical. Clara was herself so free from shyness that she could not understand the feeling in others. Little Rosie looked very pretty in a pink and white sailor waist, with skirt to match. Her inky-black hair was crowned with a snowy cap in keeping with the breezy nautical suit. The little maid had most original and ingenious ideas in dress. There was always something novel, something quaint and fresh in Rosie's attire; if it was but a flower or a ruffle, or a bit of ribbon, or lace oddly placed, it was sure to be pretty and tasteful. She never wore those floral piles on her pretty head which other young ladies affected, but was given to cunning little round hats of cloth variously colored, with wide or curling brims, and, perhaps, a single feather topping it.

Myrtle welcomed her friends cordially. She could not resist Rosie's pretty face, but bent down and kissed her as one kisses a sweet child, but Clara was not at all gracious to the little maid, having in mind, doubtless, Rosie's humble position behind Murly's counter.

"You are looking very nice, Clara," said Rosie, timidly.

"Thank you," said Clara, coldly.

Rosie regarded her wistfully, wishing, perhaps, more ardently than ever before that Clara was more friendly. Time was when she would have welcomed a wordy battle with her old-time enemy, but her spunk had vanished with her pertness, and she felt herself kindly disposed towards all the world.

"Who's all coming, Myrtle?" asked Clara, for the twentieth time. "Oh, here is Grace Fairfield."

She was quickly followed by May Stanley, the Rochester sisters, the elder Miss Hammersmith, Fanny Rowland, and

four or five others. They came in laughing and chattering, and went dancing about the library and into the parlor and out again, filling the staid old house with the merry music of their laughter. They examined all of Aunt Sadie's treasures, peeped into Mr. Watterson's study, explored the kitchen and the cellar, and finally ran upstairs in a madcap frolic. Myrtle showed them her chamber, a cozily furnished room, with windows opening upon the lawn in front, and Aunt Sadie's room just beside it, and even her father's, though she permitted no one to enter that sacred apartment.

"I want to see Sherman's room," cried Clara, gayly. This called forth a chorus of delighted "Oh's."

"Where is it, Myrtle?" was the general cry.

"I shall tell him," cried Myrtle, laughing, "he shall know the names of all who dare to enter there."

She threw open the door with a flourish, saying "Behold!"

A dozen mischievous girls crowded around the doorway, peeping in, giggling and nudging each other. Clara, bolder than her companions, stepped across the threshold, but when frightened a little at her own temerity, she would have retreated, she was pushed further in by the others crowding after her like sheep, giggling and crying out in reckless abandon. Once in they scattered everywhere, poking their little noses into everything, examining all of Sherman's belongings with breathless curiosity. No doubt they one and all had brothers at home, and were tolerably familiar with the general appearance of a bachelor's apartments, but visiting the innermost sanctum of a young gentleman, their famous friend, secretly as it were, and by stealth, savored very much of reckless adventure, and the various objects seen in this light possessed a peculiar interest and attraction. Myrtle remained standing in the doorway looking on and laughing. One or two of the more timid kept her company. Rosie was one, and Grace Fairfield another. Clara, too, remained standing near the door, looking around the room with a very soft and sweet expression of countenance.

"Don't touch anything, girls!" commanded Myrtle, sternly.

"No, no! The idea!"

But even while these indignant exclamations were floating in the air, little Fanny Rowland, the leader of this mischievous band, let fall a small rosewood box, which she had vainly tried to open. It crashed upon the carpet, and bursting open, a shower of trinkets scattered around. Fanny fled, laughing, while her companions hastily gathered up Sherman's treasures and restored them to the box, and the box to the drawer, whence Fanny had procured it.

"Fanny, keep away from that closet," cried Myrtle, but Fanny had already thrown wide the door, disclosing Sherman's wardrobe to the startled eyes of her companions. Half a dozen girls hurled themselves shrieking upon the door, closing it.

"Come, now, girls. Let's go down-stairs," said Myrtle, coaxingly. They paid no heed to her, and the fun went on. They brushed their hair with Sherman's brushes; rubbed their rosy cheeks on Sherman's towels; adorned themselves with Sherman's jewels, and prinked before Sherman's mirrors. They inscribed their names in his books, and rummaged through every accessible drawer. They explored every nook and corner, but it remained for madcap Fanny to make the grandest discovery of all. Drawing aside a pair of lofty curtains, she peeped behind them, and cried: "Oh, girls!" in a tone of voice which brought them on the run. Fanny held the curtains firmly together, the while they overwhelmed her with eager questions. Then with a little shriek she threw them open, disclosing—Sherman's bed!

One startled glance they cast upon this appalling object, then turning tail they fled, shrieking with laughter, from the room, and down-stairs, pausing not once until they arrived flushed and panting in the library. Once there Myrtle locked the door, and commanding silence, bade them gather around the table and prepare for the business of the day.

"Girls," said Myrtle, "I have explained to each of you my reasons for calling you together; but will briefly go over them again in order that any obscure point may be cleared up. It is my aim to form an association of women whose object will be to study and discuss the many grave problems confronting the women of this generation, but which will

first and foremost devote its energies to the study and advancement of woman's suffrage. It is possible that you have hitherto given no thought to this grave question, and that after looking into it with me, it may not appeal to you, but on the contrary, make you adverse to taking up or continuing in the work. A prejudice exists in the minds of many worthy people against woman's suffrage, which is as absurd as it is far-fetched and reasonless. They declare that the woman who believes in and advocates it has lost that femininity so dear to all women; that she is masculine, freakish, unwomanly, and from fear of this kind of censure, or from an honest conviction against it, some of you may not care to identify yourselves with the movement I hope to inaugurate. Now, I do not think—I am very sure, indeed, that there is nothing wrong, nothing unwomanly, in demanding the suffrage, nothing masculine in our desire to study the problems underlying the social and industrial life of woman, but I want each one who joins with me in this movement to be perfectly open and fearless in expressing the views which she may be led to entertain, after having given it some study, and also to consider herself free to withdraw at any time. I would like to convert you all to my way of thinking, but if I cannot do so, I hope that our differences of opinion will not alienate our friendship nor the respect we owe and entertain toward each other."

Myrtle paused and looked around at the two rows of pretty faces turned towards her, all expressing bright intelligence and a lively curiosity of what was to follow this portentous introduction.

"There are certain rules which I have written out," she continued, "to the observance of which every member of our club must pledge herself. I shall not read them now, but I shall give each of you a copy, which I hope you will study fully when at leisure. I should like, however, to call your attention to the first rule laid down here, and that is: 'We pledge ourselves never to discuss the faults, the sins, the shortcomings of each other, nor of our friends and neighbors.' Do you understand, girls?" continued Myrtle, very gravely. "If this rule is strictly adhered to, the others will be easy to keep. Gossiping engenders bitter feeling and dis-

trust, which, by destroying all good feeling, destroys all possibility of our working intelligently and harmoniously together; and to gain results, harmony and accord is absolutely necessary. We must trust each other fully, and assist each other in our work."

There ensued a moment of silence. Myrtle waited very anxiously for some one to speak. It was most material to her plans that this should be fully understood and agreed to, and she felt grateful to Clara, who was the first to break the silence.

"You are quite right, Myrtle," said Clara, nodding her head, gravely.

"Myrtle is always right," said Rosie, in her soft voice.

"May I ask," said Fanny Rowland, demurely, "what we are to talk about?"

This called forth a general shriek of laughter, in which Myrtle gayly joined.

"Surely, Fanny," she said, "there are many interesting topics to converse upon. Our own doings, the virtues of our friends, our dresses, our papas, and—well, our lovers."

"Oh, dear," said Fanny, "I haven't got my lover yet."

"Well," said Myrtle, smiling, "you surely will have some day. But, indeed, girls, this is a very, very serious matter. Harmony is the secret of the success of every kind of union, and harmony cannot prevail where distrust and ill-feeling exists. Men are successful in their organizations. They do not talk about each other—at least not bitterly. I hope that the club which we are now forming may spread in time over the entire State and country; that women, inspired by our example, may band together and work together for our complete and triumphant emancipation, and for the right to work, not against, but side by side with, our brothers, for their interests and our own. The finger of scorn will be pointed at us; we will be laughed at; our work will be derided, but we will persevere. Being ignorant, we may be happy, not because of what we have, but because we do not know what we lack, but being enlightened we see so much that of right belongs to us, which is wrongfully or illegally withheld from us, that contentment is impossible. True happiness can only be based on equal right. The whole

thing resolves itself into one little question—shall we, as intelligent, reasoning women, rest content in our present sphere with the contentment of an ignorant child or of an idiot? Or shall we, with a discontent wholly natural, strive to gain the rights so long denied us through blind ignorance or unreasoning prejudice and tyranny? But, pardon me, I do not mean to go into the matter at this meeting."

"Go on, Myrtle," said Fanny.

Myrtle glanced at the others. Several faces reflected Fanny's interest, and these she carefully noted; others appeared engrossed in their own thoughts, and two or three looked decidedly bored.

"No, Fanny," she said, smiling. "I wished merely to prepare today for the future. Papa has given us permission to use the library until such time as we shall feel confidence enough in our venture to engage a regular meeting place down town."

"Oh, Myrtle," cried Clara, "we can do that, now. I'm sure that my papa will give me enough money to get a hall."

"No, no, Clara," said Myrtle, looking rather uneasily at the frowning glances cast at Clara by less fortunate daughters. "When we have advanced so far I will go to papa, to Mr. Marblemore, to Mr. Rowland, and to all our dear parents, and each shall contribute according to his means and inclination."

"But you will let me take charge of the gymnasium?" said Clara. "Indeed, indeed you must, girls. I understand all about athletics."

"Do we really require a gymnasium?" asked Myrtle, doubtfully.

"Goodness, gracious me, yes!" cried Clara, aghast. "Don't you like athletics, Myrtle?"

"I'm ashamed to confess it," said Myrtle, smiling, "but I don't."

"Oh, we must have a gymnasium."

"Let's put it to a vote," cried Myrtle, gayly. "All in favor of a gymnasium will signify by saying 'Aye.'"

A great chorus of "Ayes" answered her.

"All not in favor say 'Nay.'"

"Nay," piped a single voice—that of Grace Fairfield, a

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frail young woman—of all present standing most in need of physical culture. Rosie, to tell the truth, would have liked to join with her, but she did not care to oppose Clara.

"We seem to be decidedly in the minority, Grace," said Myrtle, joining in the laugh that greeted poor Grace's lonely stand. "Well, they shall have their gymnasium, but we two shall stay sternly away from it."

"What's our name to be, Myrtle?" cried Fanny.

"We must vote upon it. Each suggest a name suitable to the purpose of our association. Personally, I favor calling it 'The Woman's Progressive Union.'"

"I say 'The Clarenceburg Girls' Athletic Club,'" said Clara.

"But it isn't to be an athletic club," cried Myrtle, frowning. "Nor, let us hope, is it to be confined to Clarenceburg, nor to girls merely. Athletics are to play a very small part in it. It is formed for the purpose of discussing subjects of interest to woman, but primarily to teach and spread the doctrine of woman's suffrage."

"How would 'Free Women of America' do?" asked Fanny.

They all had their say, and some of the names suggested occasioned much merry laughter. But in the end they agreed upon Myrtle's choice, and the newly formed club was christened "The Woman's Progressive Union."

"Now we must elect officers," said Myrtle, "the President first."

"Oh, you shall be President, of course," said Fanny.

"Of course," chorused the others.

"Not necessarily," said Myrtle, coloring with pleasure however. "I constituted myself chairman of this meeting because it was so informal, but it does not necessarily follow that I must be President of the permanent organization. Though," she added, "I should like to be."

"Well, all I've got to say," said Fanny, firmly, "is that unless Myrtle is chosen President I won't join."

"Now, that isn't nice, Fanny," said Myrtle, reproachfully.

"I don't care," declared Fanny, stoutly, "I mean it."

"Would anyone like to try for the place?" said Myrtle,

looking around, but directing her glance more especially at Clara.

"Not I, thank you," replied Clara, good-naturedly.

"Let's vote on it," cried Fanny. "I think voting is just lovely. I make a motion that Miss Myrtle Watterson be unanimously elected President of 'The Woman's Progressive Union.'"

The motion was carried with a storm of applause, and Myrtle thanked them very kindly. Then followed a contest for the post of Vice-President. Miss Hammersmith won the honor, Fanny sweetly resigning her claim in that young lady's favor. Grace Fairfield was chosen Secretary. Clara became Treasurer, and the other offices were distributed to the satisfaction of all.

"Now, girls, let us begin right," said Myrtle, "let us resolve to work hand in hand for the prosperity of our Union and the success of the cause for which it is formed. We will be warm friends and loving companions, recognizing no social status among ourselves, save that of absolute equality, all working in a common cause for the common good. We will have no laws of exclusion, all earnest women of ordinary intelligence, whether married or single, are welcome. I expect each of you to interest a friend or two in this movement and to bring as many as possible to join hands with us. And now," added Myrtle, rising in conclusion, "please consider yourselves my guests."

She unlocked the door and rang for Franklin, who appeared promptly, and began arrangements for serving refreshments in the library. Aunt Sadie came in from her rounds in the midst of the banquet, and she was at once surrounded by a bevy of bright-eyed girls, and pressed to join them. She sat down among them, but laughingly declined to touch food.

"It is not good to eat at irregular intervals," she said, sagely, "it overtaxes the stomach, and when the stomach is persistently overtaxed it becomes weakened and the entire system becomes, in consequence, debilitated. Not a morsel of food should pass your lips between regular meals, because the smallest morsel entering the stomach, sets the gastric juices flowing, and if they are kept in constant flow their

powers soon become exhausted. The stomach, my dears, the stomach!" concluded Aunt Sadie, as usual shaking her head very gravely.

"I haven't any stomach, Aunt Sadie," cried Fanny.

"Oh, yes, you have, child," said Aunt Sadie, who considered the subject entirely too serious to jest upon.

"Then," said Fanny, sending her pearly teeth through a huge piece of frosted cake, "I defy it."

Aunt Sadie laughed with the others, glancing very kindly at the mischievous little woman whose clear, bright eyes and rosy cheeks proclaimed her stomach her humble slave and minister.

"Papa," said Myrtle that evening, when they were alone together in the study, "I have made a beginning."

"Have you, indeed, my love?" he replied, smiling down at her as she sat on a footstool at his knee.

"I mean to work hard, Papa, and get as many members and converts as possible. I know you do not believe in it, Papa, and I promise never to ask you to advocate a cause which you cannot conscientiously espouse. Do you not think it possible that the little seed which I planted today may grow and spread as yours did?"

Mr. Watterson shook his head.

"Why, Papa?"

"It may, Myrtle. Women are much better than men, much purer in mind and heart, but the seed my dear that you planted has nothing in common with mine. The political organization I founded spread only, and remained intact, because to keep it so was to the interest of its leading members. Self-interest, my dear—self-interest rules the world. My associates knew that political success was more than possible—an absolute certainty with organization, and as political success meant personal reward, they assisted at the growth of the organization and remained faithful to it through the years. Do you not see the difference, my dear? You have no reward to hold out to your followers for faithful and earnest effort. I am afraid that the movement you inaugurated today will not extend beyond this city—hardly beyond your immediate circle of friends, who will join you out of personal love. I do not say this to discourage you,

Myrtle, only to warn you not to be too sanguine of far-reaching results."

Myrtle sat silent and depressed. She felt the truth of her father's arguments, and wondered why they had never occurred to her before. Self-interest was surely at the bottom of all successful enterprise.

"Do not give up, darling," said her father, tenderly. "All earnest effort, however discouraging, however hopeless, is noble and ennobling. What I have told you just now was a disagreeable truth and a task imposed upon me by the overconfidence you displayed. I could not bear to witness your disappointment after failure. Now you will be prepared for the possibility of failure at least, and you know what you have to contend with. If all your associates were as earnest as you, my daughter, if all women were as intelligent, success would be a foregone conclusion. But they are not. They are inspired by purer ideals, by nobler motives than those that animate their brothers, but they are not as strong intellectually, or, at least, their intellectual endeavors are directed into entirely different channels from those into which you wish to direct them. But work on, my dear. You are making a name for yourself, and that must certainly lend the movement some impetus. You must enlist the attention of earnest, purposeful women everywhere. But have you thought of everything, sweetheart? Have you reflected that even the smallest success means personal criticism? You will be called strong-minded, unwomanly, mannish. It is the penalty we pay for successful climbing, my daughter. Have you thought of all that, darling?"

"Yes, Papa," said Myrtle, coloring deeply.

"You are very sensitive, Myrtle."

"I wouldn't mind anything, Papa, if only they don't call me unwomanly," said Myrtle, clasping her hands in a way she had when deeply moved. Then she laughed. "Why, should I mind that? It wouldn't be true, because they said it, would it, Papa? Oh, dear, I wouldn't mind being called mannish, Papa, because that would be absurd, nor freakish because that would be ridiculous, but unwomanly, Papa! The word means so much."

"Better give it up, dear," her father said, raising his eyebrows.

"No, never!"

"Even if you are called unwomanly?"

"Yes, Papa—I wouldn't mind—that is after a while. And besides you will know better and—and—so will—Sherman," this last in a very faint voice, indeed.

"Listen, dear," said Mr. Watterson, bending down and kissing her flushed cheeks, "I want to tell you that I believe you are fighting for the right."

"Oh, you dear sweet, darling, love of a Papa!" cried Myrtle, springing up in a rapture of joy. "Do you really and truly believe in the truth and justice of my cause?"

"Yes, I do believe that all you ask is your right, but believing it I would not put out my hand to give it to you."

"But why, Papa? Why? Why? Why?"

"Because I believe that it would lower women in the eyes of men. I believe that women are intended for a far higher, nobler, purer sphere of usefulness."

"But dear, sweet, darling Papa," cried Myrtle, excitedly, "don't you see it is our right?"

"I do not deny it, Myrtle. I expressly state that when you come to speak of your right in the matter it certainly is your right, but it would lower you to the level of men to have that right. And that, in my opinion, is the way a majority of men regard the matter."

"Papa, if you saw me—me, your daughter—whom you know and love—if you saw me going into the polls to vote, would you consider me unwomanly. Would it lower me in your eyes?"

"No, no; of course not."

"If you saw me in legislative halls, Papa, championing the cause of working girls, of homeless children, of the aged and destitute, would it lower me in your eyes?"

"What a question, Myrtle; certainly not!"

"Tell me, Papa, if you saw Aunt Sadie, your mother, and—pardon me, dear Papa, my mama, doing the like, would they appear less womanly, less pure, less lovable in your eyes?"

"No, Myrtle; on the contrary."

"Then you see, Papa," cried Myrtle, clapping her hands, all rosy with triumphant glee.

"But—but—but—"

"Oh, Papa," cried Myrtle, covering his mouth with her rosy fingers, "you've acknowledged it and you can't recede. You were speaking of woman in the abstract, you would say, and not of those near and dear to you; but, Papa, don't you see, your regard for woman in the abstract is merely a reflection of the regard which you entertain for us. And so it is with other men. We women, dear Papa, are not the angels you think us; we are poor, weak, everyday mortals like yourself. We have ideals which we wish to see carried out. We see evils around us in which women and children are the peculiar sufferers and which therefore appeal peculiarly to us who can understand them, but we cannot remedy their wrongs because the means to do so are withheld from us. The ballot, Papa, is the sole and only helpful lever of modern life. In private life women have their allotted tasks and so have men, but believe me, Papa, there is work in public life that may be divided in the same way. There is injustice towards women in many of our laws which have come down to us from feudal times, and which we cannot remedy because the ballot is denied us. In eight of our States a woman has no right to her own property after marriage. Is that right, Papa? Is it just? In sixteen states a wife has no legal right to her own earnings. Is not that monstrous? In thirty-eight states a mother has no legal right to her own children—the babies she bore, Papa, in anguish and in suffering, and reared at untold sacrifice through the years of helpless infancy. Oh, my, Papa, what do you call that? I know of no word to characterize such a law. In some states there is no law compelling a man to support his own family, and yet that same man has under the law the right to take his wife's earnings and squander them in drink. Oh, Papa, I am so miserable!" And the earnest, tender-hearted girl laid her head on her father's shoulder and burst into a passion of tears.

"Do not take it so to heart, darling," said her father, anxiously, "you must not grieve over it so."

"But I cannot help it, Papa," sobbed Myrtle.

"It will all come right, dear."

"No doubt, but, oh, when? There now, I'm done," she added, smiling through her tears, "I know it's foolish, Papa, but I can't help it. I often lay awake nights crying when I think of all the good we could do if the one little boon we crave were not denied us. I believe that many of our opponents oppose us from honest conviction, believing sincerely that the possession of the ballot would tend to lower woman; but they are mistaken, Papa, and I for one am most impatient of being treated like a child, or an idiot, under guise of being looked up to as an angel. But there, forgive me, Papa," she concluded, hugging him soundly. "I ought to be punished in some way for presuming to raise my voice in your dear presence. It is a sin to dispute with one's own loving father. I will never do it again."

"But I want you to tell me of your progress, Myrtle," said Mr. Watterson, smiling. "Perhaps in the work of organizing I can be of some assistance to you, and—and—I will look deeper into the matter."

He was, in fact, of very great assistance to Myrtle in the work of organizing and firmly establishing the club. He labored with great patience and industry, until his daughter's favorite project was fairly launched. With a handsome meeting hall down town, having a gymnasium and reading room attached, the membership of the newly formed organization grew, spreading with giant strides among the younger progressive element in the city. In viewing its prosperous beginning, Myrtle's hopes for the success of her entire gigantic plan rose to the point of absolute certainty.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE REV. MORTIMER RINGROSE MAKES A CALL.

Mrs. Marblemore, with Elmer and Clara by her side, was sitting in a small drawing room one afternoon early in July. Clara was chattering away with much animation, relating various amusing incidents of college life, to which her stepmother listened with an air of smiling interest; but which seemed to irritate Elmer extremely. That young gentleman was very restless. He wandered about the room, dropping now into this chair, now into that, only to bound up again after a moody moment, and continue his restless movements. He wore a sullen expression of countenance and cast many impatient glances at the robust, smiling young woman.

"Oh, shut up that infernal chatter, will you?" he suddenly exclaimed. "Good Lord, don't you know anything to talk about except that crazy college?"

Clara flushed angrily, but said no word in reply. She cast one quick glance in his direction, a glance of unutterable loathing, and turned away in silent contempt.

"Elmer!" cried Mrs. Marblemore, greatly shocked by this exhibition of ill-manners. "How can you be so very rude?"

"Oh, well!" exclaimed Elmer, manifestly surprised and shamed by Clara's unexpected forbearance. "I beg Clara's pardon."

"It is not at all necessary, sir," replied Clara, icily.

She rose, and with a word of excuse to Mrs. Marblemore, swept from the room.

"Did you ever see such infernal pride!" cried the young man, gazing after her with an air of disgust and injury.

"But you were very, very rude, Elmer," said his mother in a gently chiding tone.

"Oh, hang her, I hate her."

He rose, growling, and crossed the room, half-seating

himself upon a small, round table, where he remained with one leg dangling, looking down at his mother, as she sat fluttering the leaves of a fashion magazine.

"I'm afraid you are prejudiced against her, Elmer. She is a very kind and generous-hearted girl, and it is Daddy's earnest wish, and mine, that you make friends with her."

"Yes, I know, you tell me so, often enough; but a fellow can't help being rude to her. Well, I'm going," he added, bending down and kissing her. "Now, don't you turn against me, Mama."

"You know I could never do that, darling," said his mother, fondly, "but we cherish a very earnest wish with respect to you and Clara."

Elmer paused and looked at her questioningly, and in her smiling eyes, he read her meaning. He threw up his hands, with an expression of horror and disgust, so comical that Mrs. Marblemore was moved to laughter—a rare thing with her.

With his going Mr. Marblemore came in, hat in hand. He had just awakened from his customary midday nap, and was on his way to business.

"What, all alone, Mary," he said, genially, "and looking over these queer pictures, I see." He took up the magazine and fluttered the pages aimlessly. "Do you find it amusing, Mary, this kind of thing, selecting styles, studying the fashions, planning dresses and the like?"

"Sometimes, Andrew," she replied listlessly.

"And then the choosing of goods, the fitting and fashioning and all the rest of it—that is still more amusing, eh?" said the smiling banker. "And that is the way women pass their lives! Rather a useless sort of existence, don't you think?"

"It is not as noble, certainly, as making money," replied Mary, with curling lip.

"No, it is not," said the banker, looking thoughtfully down at her. "No, it is not," he repeated with more emphasis. "And that reminds me, I must be going."

She did not rise, but sat with downcast eyes. He bent and kissed her, then stood for a moment looking down at her, with an infinite pride and tenderness.

"You are very beautiful, Mary," he said, slowly. She looked up at him in surprise, smiling a little. "You are more beautiful now then when we married—let me see, it is now eleven years ago. Is it not wonderful how some women retain their beauty. It is all in the care one takes of one's self, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," she replied.

"You are a strange woman, Mary," he continued, settling himself at ease against the table, and looking down at her with his hands clasped before him and his hat dangling. "A very strange woman. I do not believe that in all these years you have said one impatient word to me. Not one. No, nor a loving one, Mary."

She colored deeply, looking up at him in surprise.

"What a singular mood you are in, Andrew," she said frowning.

"Yes; I can't conceive what brought it on unless it was seeing you here so fresh and pretty. However, the fact remains that in all these years you have not spoken an affectionate word to me. Kind you have been always, and gentleness itself, but affectionate, never."

"I told you, Andrew, when I agreed to marry you,"—she began in tones of deep agitation.

"You told me," he interrupted, composedly, "that you did not love me; that you never could learn to love me. Yes, I remember, Mary. You were very candid and rather angry at my perseverance. How often did I propose to you, my dear? Twenty times? A hundred times? I don't know, but I should certainly have continued my courtship until now if you had remained single. You told me that you did not love me, and my answer was that I was well content to take you as you were, trusting to win your regard in later days. I have never repented doing so, but I have often wondered, Mary, why you married me. It was not love, that was understood; it was not wealth, nor position. You enjoyed both in a greater degree with the Wattersons than I could at that time give to you. And besides, it is my opinion that you care for neither. Then what was it?"

"You were very persevering, Andrew," she replied, faintly, "and very pressing."

"Ah!" he said, nodding his great head, "was that it? Well, I have never repented the step. You have made me very happy, Mary. Nevertheless I must say you are a strange woman—a very strange, dear, lovable little wife."

He bent down, endeavoring to look into her eyes, but she avoided his gaze.

"Our children are grown now, Mary," he continued, presently.

"Yes, but they are bitter enemies still," she replied.

"I am very sorry for that," he said in a tone of concern. "I had hoped that they would have forgotten their childish enmity long ago. If we could only bring them together my dear; they are in no way related, and a marriage between them would be a good thing all around. What is this?"

A servant had entered bearing a card. Mrs. Marblemore took it up, and with her husband looking over her shoulder, read the name upon it, "Rev. Mortimer Ringrose."

"Ah, show him in," said the banker, without awaiting his wife's pleasure in the matter. His genial expression of countenance gave way in a moment to that stiff assumption of arrogant dignity which sat so ill upon him. He was a member of the church over which his reverence presided, a trustee and its most powerful pillar, and having contributed a large sum of money towards its erection he looked upon the sacred edifice as in some sort a Marblemore asset—non-negotiable, to be sure—but still a part of him and his belongings. And the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose, a large part of whose munificent salary he paid, stood on somewhat the same plane in his mind as that occupied by Ainsworth and Johnson.

His reverence came in smiling and deferential, and advanced quickly towards the banker, who remained stiffly stationed beside his wife's chair. Mrs. Marblemore, more courteous, rose and advanced a step or two to meet him, regarding him with the same expression of curiosity which she had worn at the church on the preceding Sunday. He shook hands with both.

"Ah, Brother Marblemore," said his reverence, "I am very glad to see you."

Mr. Marblemore looked as if that were a matter of course, and remarked frostily that it was a fine day.

"Yes," said Mr. Ringrose, glancing through the window, with renewed interest in the sunshine and clear blue sky, now that the wealthy banker had mentioned his approval of them. "A beautiful day truly; let us thank God for it. I called," continued his reverence, seating himself gracefully, and turning his fine eyes upon Mrs. Marblemore, who had now resumed her chair, "to solicit Sister Marblemore's interest in a project I have formed for the purpose of raising a certain sum of money for missionary purposes."

He glanced deferentially at the banker and resumed, addressing himself directly to Mrs. Marblemore.

"I have heard that you take an active interest in church work, Sister Marblemore," he said, smilingly.

"You have heard quite right," interposed Mr. Marblemore. "Whenever there is money required—money," he repeated, laying a peculiar emphasis on the word, "to carry on church work of any kind, you may confidently come to Mrs. Marblemore."

"Pardon me, Brother," said his reverence, sweetly, "but I do not want money."

"Eh!" ejaculated the banker, staring, "you—do—not—want—money!"

"Mr. Ringrose, if I understand him aright merely seeks our approbation, and possibly our cooperation in a project he has formed," said Mrs. Marblemore, raising her eyes to her husband's face.

"Ah, that's it," said the banker, rather vaguely, "and this project, what is it if I may ask?"

"I have been thinking of an entertainment," said his reverence, softly, "a simple and innocent charade, in which the members of the church may take part, and which may be given on the ground floor of the church. An admission fee will be charged and the proceeds will go to the missionary fund."

"I am not aware," said Mr. Marblemore, swelling prodigiously, "that any such thing is necessary at *our* church."

"The generosity of the members is too well known to need any word from me," murmured his reverence, "but—"

"We are not accustomed to that sort of thing, sir," said Mr. Marblemore, coldly. "Our pastor has but to make his requirements known to have them attended to."

"I know it, I am sure of it," said Mr. Ringrose, casting an appealing glance at Mrs. Marblemore, who, looking up at the moment, caught the look, and on impulse answered by a little down-drawing of the corners of the mouth, expressing comical despair; she bit her lips a moment later, but the sign was given, and she felt meanly conscious that there was a kind of secret understanding established between herself and this man. "I have reason to know that such is the case, Brother; but that is the one thing I want to do away with. It is not right, Brother Marblemore, it is very wrong and unjust that a few members of the church should bear the entire burden of such necessary contributions. They should be borne by all. I must tell you—it is my duty to tell you, dear Brother," continued his reverence, in quite a glow, "that in your noble generosity you are not only unjust to yourself, but also to those of my flock who have not been burdened by God with the wealth which He in His infinite wisdom has placed into your keeping. Those who wish to contribute their little mite to so worthy a cause are deprived of the opportunity of doing so if you insist upon taking the entire burden upon yourself. Pardon me, Brother, for speaking so plainly," said his reverence, demurely, "but it is not right, it is wrong and unjust."

"Perhaps you are right—er—Brother Ringrose," said Mr. Marblemore, complacently. "No doubt you are right."

A slightly scornful smile curled the corner of Mrs. Marblemore's mouth, but her eyes were fixed persistently upon the carpet. She could not look up without meeting the glance of the man sitting opposite her, and in his eyes there was ever a significance which filled her with uneasiness.

"And so," continued his reverence, "I thought of adopting a plan which will permit everyone to contribute equally to the fund, and one that will at the same time bring our brothers and sisters together for an evening of social intercourse and amusement."

"I do not like it," said Mr. Marblemore, shaking his head. "It is something we have never practiced."

"Old-fashioned notions have hitherto prevailed," said Mr. Ringrose, with another appealing glance at Mrs. Marblemore, which seemed to compel her own. "Everything changes—progresses—even the church."

"I consider the plan a good one," said Mrs. Marblemore, glancing up just long enough to give her husband a flashing glimpse of the blue of her eyes.

"Do you, indeed, Mary?" he replied.

"I do."

"Well, I must be going," said Mr. Marblemore, suddenly. "You can talk it over between you, and we will settle it all at some future time."

"Permit me to thank you, Sister," said Mr. Ringrose, when the banker had gone, "for your generous aid in endeavoring to overcome Brother Marblemore's very pronounced opposition. His consent is absolutely necessary to me. I called today merely to solicit your interest with him. I was most fortunate in meeting him here, and still more fortunate in gaining your cooperation."

"It is nothing," said Mrs. Marblemore, in a tone of constraint.

"May I count upon your further assistance, Sister Marblemore?" said his reverence, gently.

"I will do what I can."

"I thank you. Perhaps you will even consent to take a part in it?"

"Oh, no."

"It would be a great help to me," said the minister, softly. His eyes had something magnetic in them. They compelled her glance and held it, and they sat for some seconds gazing into each other's eyes. Mary slowly shook her head in dissent, her color momentarily deepening.

"I have selected a sketch, a very pretty little piece, indeed. It is a love story, with the conventional hero and villain, and with many minor characters. It will be comparatively easy to fill them all if you will consent to take the principal role—that of the heroine. The part is a strong one and must be undertaken by a woman who has not only more than ordinary intelligence, but more than ordinary

beauty and grace of person. And you—pardon me, Sister—you fill all these requirements admirably."

Mrs. Marblemore smiled at this, smiled very brightly, with her eyes sparkling and her cheeks scarlet. Clearly she saw through his words, but their gross flattery was not displeasing to her.

"A rôle so important also requires youth," she said, demurely.

"Certainly."

"And I am no longer young."

"A woman is no older than she looks," said his reverence, smiling. "Not only are you young enough, Sister, but your mind is more matured, and you are thus better able to comprehend and overcome the difficulties of the rôle than you would have been years ago."

But still Mrs. Marblemore continued to shake her head.

"You must, Sister," said his reverence. "Please promise me that you will think of it."

"I will think of it," said she, slowly.

"And I earnestly hope that you will decide in my favor," pursued Mr. Ringrose, smilingly. "I have an admirable hero in mind. He is handsome in person, very elegant and graceful in bearing, and I should say more than ordinarily intelligent. You can guess whom I mean?"

"Sherman Watterson, perhaps."

"No, no; I mean Elmer Marblemore, whom I met for the first time last Sunday."

"My son?"

"If you had not declared it," said the gallant minister, "I should have said your brother. Would you not like to have him interpret the hero should you conclude to undertake the heroine's part?"

"I should, indeed."

"Then it will be for you to win him over. And would not this Sherman Watterson make an admirable villain? He is dark you know—the hue of the conventional villain."

"I'm afraid he would not undertake the part. He is not a member of the church, and attends service only to please Aunt Sadie."

"But if you used such influence as you possess with Sister Watterson—"

The door opened at this moment, and Aunt Sadie entered unannounced.

"Oh, Mary, I'm so glad to have found you at home," she cried, so intent upon her friend that she did not see the minister until he came toward her for the inevitable handclasp. His sudden presence startled the timid lady, and she stood for a moment quite speechless, with her hand gently patting her hair and her eyes expressing great surprise.

"I only came in for a moment, Mary," she said, seating herself quietly near her friend.

"We were discussing a plan which Mr. Ringrose has formed for the purpose of raising a certain amount of money for missionary purposes," said Mary, smiling brightly upon her friend. "In order that the honor of contributing to so worthy a cause may be equally divided, Mr. Ringrose proposes that we give an entertainment in the form of a charade —a little play, you know—the various characters of which are to be interpreted by members of the church."

"My gracious!" cried Aunt Sadie, her imagination fired in a moment. "Won't that be grand! But when will it be, Mary? Not before Saturday, I hope? My boy has gone away for a few days, but he will be here by Saturday. He must see it, Mary."

"My dear Auntie," cried Mary, laughing. "It can't be for weeks yet—or months!"

"Oh!" said Aunt Sadie, in deep disappointment.

"You see, Sister," said Mr. Ringrose, "it is only an idea as yet, a step contemplated, but extremely uncertain because we do not know if we can carry it out. In the first place it is something quite new and original, something that has never before been attempted here, and there will be a natural prejudice on the part of the more old-fashioned to overcome."

"Oh!" said Aunt Sadie, whose shy brown eyes throughout the minister's little speech had flashed in momentary flashes upon him, then roved quickly away.

"I should like, if possible, to get Sherman to take a part in the play," continued Mr. Ringrose.

"My gracious, yes!" cried Aunt Sadie, delightedly. In a flash she saw her boy strutting in heroic grandeur before a breathless audience.

"I have an excellent part for him," said his reverence, "it is that of a villain—"

"A villain," faltered Aunt Sadie, glancing with dismay from Mr. Ringrose to Mary. "My boy a villain, Mary! Why he's the sweetest, purest boy in the world."

She regarded the minister with an aspect of determined resolution, as if she quite defied him to contradict her.

"But he could take the part in a play, Auntie," said Mary.

"He couldn't, Mary," said Aunt Sadie, indignantly. "Why, how could he? I'm surprised, Mary, that you should think so."

"Perhaps Sister Watterson will herself take a part," said Mr. Ringrose.

This was too much. Aunt Sadie rose hurriedly, gathering her ample skirts together in her hands.

"I must really go now, Mary," she said breathlessly, "I merely stopped in in passing. Good-bye."

And with a gentle inclination of the head towards Mr. Ringrose, she fled.

"My gracious!" gasped Aunt Sadie, breathing deeply as she clambered into her phaeton, "how very terrible! My boy a villain, and me in a play! Dear! Dear!"

"I must go now, Sister Marblemore," said Mr. Ringrose, rising, "I have some calls to make."

He pressed her hand warmly at parting and warmly looked into her eyes, his own expressing the audacious admiration he felt for her womanly beauty.

"I may come again," he said, "to talk it over?"

"Yes, if you wish," she replied in tones of constraint.

Sitting beside the window, which opened upon the lawn, she followed him with her eyes. His graceful figure set off to full advantage in his long frock coat, filled her with strange interest. Her recollection of his eyes and what she had read in them, awakened in her a sensation such as she had never known. Mary sat looking out long after he had disappeared from her sight—thinking, thinking, think-

ing of him and of his daring. She went upstairs to her room after a while, but wandered restlessly back again. She remained at home all the evening. She had no duties, no cares or responsibilities. Her life was absolutely empty and devoid of interest. She was a perpetual victim of ennui, given to melancholy thoughts, brooding always, until brooding had become second nature to her—a state of mind so habitual as to become apathetic.

But this evening she spent in feverish activity. Visitors came, neighbors, friends and trades-people. She received them all, and when quite alone later in the evening she went wandering through the great house, exploring nooks and corners where probably she had never been before, always thinking, thinking, of the man whose eyes haunted her. She could not banish him from her mind. Her thoughts of him were vague and disquieting, but none the less imbued with a certain interesting charm that caught her fancy and held it for hours in thrall.

She met her husband that evening almost at the outer door. She had been waiting for him in the wide hallway. He was no less astonished than delighted by this unusual mark of affection on her part.

"What is it, Mary?" he said, when they were alone in the little parlor adjoining the dining-room.

"Nothing, Andrew," she answered. "I become impatient sometimes when you are away so long."

"My dear Mary," he said. He sat for a time revolving her words in his mind. "Do you want any money, Mary?" he said, abstractedly.

She turned away from him then and, in a strangely altered voice, said "No," and walked out of the room.

He gazed after her in mild surprise. He did not connect her abrupt departure with his question, nor had he at all noticed her altered manner. Money was the thing at all times uppermost in his thoughts, and wishing to reward an act of unusual kindness his mind had naturally, or rather mechanically suggested money as the only desirable means of showing his gratitude.

Mary's demeanor at dinner was as cold and calm as usual, but he hugged to his soul the thought of a heart that beat warmly for him beneath her cold exterior.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH HIS REVERENCE GAINS A CONFIDANT AND FRIEND.

Mr. Ringrose walked slowly away from the great mansion, his head bent in thought. He nodded courteously in answering the respectful greetings of those whom he met; he smiled at the sisters, exchanged a laughing word with a brother minister driving by, he patted the curly pates of awed children, and once put his hand into his pocket when solicited, and, with a kindly smile, bestowed a silver dollar upon a particularly ragged specimen of humanity. But through it all his mind was busy with thoughts of the woman he had left behind in that gorgeous mansion.

How beautiful she was, how strangely alluring in her high position. Was she happy with that great booby, her husband? Impossible! Mr. Ringrose smiled, recalling that charming little grimace which she had bestowed upon him, as if in mutual contempt of the stiff-necked banker's haughty demeanor. And those eyes, how timidly they had encountered his; questioning they were; but not forbidding. It was as if she sought his purpose in gazing upon her; she did not understand, but she was not offended.

His reverence smiled once more, and turned towards the little white cottage in which dwelt the widow Rosewood. The door was promptly opened in answer to his knock, and Mrs. Rosewood herself appeared upon the threshold.

The little widow blushed and smiled as she drew back, opening the door to its fullest width.

"And how is Sister Rosewood today?" asked Mr. Ringrose, pressing her hand and smiling sweetly into her eyes.

"Quite well," replied Mrs. Rosewood, internally thanking her stars that she had on her neatest, prettiest pink and white wrapper. She made an effort to withdraw her hand from his embrace, but he did not release it at once.

"You are looking well, Sister," he said softly.

"Thank you," replied the little widow, smiling.

She placed a chair for the minister, and herself sat down quite across the little parlor opposite him, folding her hands demurely in her lap.

"I'm so glad to have found you at home," said his reverence. "I wished to talk over a certain matter with you."

Mrs. Rosewood smiled down at her hands, not at all displeased it would seem at the glance of his eyes.

"I shall be delighted," she said.

Then he told her of the project he had formed, of the success he had met with in endeavoring to interest the more influential members of his flock, and throughout this little recital he kept his admiring eyes fixed persistently upon the little widow, who divided her glance between the minister's handsome face and her own plump, white hands, exhibiting through it all a mixture of consciousness and confusion that would have sat better upon a woman of half her years.

"It was very kind of you to think of me," said Mrs. Rosewood, when he had finished with a plea for her consideration and interest in his plan.

"And why shouldn't I think of you, Sister," said Mr. Ringrose rising and coming across to her, and seating himself on a convenient chair beside her own. "Why shouldn't I think of you?"

He took one of her plump hands in his and pressed it gently.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Mrs. Rosewood, her lips trembling as if she would cry. "Because I'm so poor, I guess."

"What difference can that make, Sister? Poverty is no disgrace. Do you think that our wealthier sisters are of more importance in my eyes because of their greater wealth? It is natural to long for wealth and to envy those who possess it—perfectly natural, because it is one of the weaknesses of erring Human Nature, but if we who are poor would but pause and reflect upon what we have in place of wealth, we would be supremely content with our lot. Now, Sister—looking at you, sitting here beside you, holding your hand in mine—I say that you are not poor but very rich."

"All you men are alike," said Mrs. Rosewood, dimpling.

"No, no, Sister," he protested warmly; "not all."

"Yes, all."

"No, no, Sister. Am I like other men now, Sister? Am I?" he said, looking deep into her eyes.

"Well, no; you are different," said Mrs. Rosewood, returning his glance, but with a vague feeling of alarm. "You are so—so bold!"

He laughed softly. He saw that his boldness did not displease her. He raised her hand to his lips, still looking into her eyes, and kissed it ere she could withdraw it. She gave a little gasp, but laughed the next moment.

"Not bold, Sister," he said, shaking his head, "surely I have done nothing to offend you?"

The little widow looked at her hand, then turned her gaze on him, her cheeks reddening as she slowly shook her head.

"I would like to ask you to be my friend," said his reverence, softly, "my particular friend and confidant. I have been around a good deal during the past few weeks, but I have seen no one whom I would rather trust, and it is necessary for a pastor to have a friend and confidant to whom he can turn at times for counsel and assistance. Would you care to be my friend, Sister Rosewood?"

"Yes, only what can I do?"

"Much, very much. You can first of all tell me about my people; what they are, and what they do, and, above all, what they say of me. It is very necessary for me to know this. I am not happy in my home life, Sister," continued his reverence, sadly.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Rosewood, shaking her head vaguely.

"No, I am very miserable. One who should be a loving companion and confidant to me is—well, it is not for me to speak of it."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Rosewood again.

"If I had a friend and confidant now to whom I could turn for that consolation of which I am deprived at home," pursued his reverence, again taking her plump hand in his, "it would make me the happiest of men."

"But what can I do?" said Mrs. Rosewood again.

"You can assist me by telling me of your friends. You see, dear friend and sister, my position is a difficult one, but for many reasons I am determined to hold it; to do so it is necessary for me to know—thoroughly know—the different people over whom I am placed, especially the more important. I wish to know how to approach them, how to converse with each so that I may not jar upon or in any way offend any one. I must win and retain the favor of the individual great men. I must be popular, in a word. Do you understand me, Sister? I must know which of our sisters are proud, which kind and genial, and which have the most influence with their neighbors. You must tell me who among them are deeply religious, who, frivolous, who, given to gossip and slander, and so on, so that in my intercourse with them I may know how to conduct myself with each and every one."

Mrs. Rosewood was distinctly conscious of feeling shocked. She had no more religious feeling than a post, but still she felt shocked and surprised. Her idea of a minister, though vague and uncertain, was still widely different from this. To be sure this reverend gentleman's bold and open admiration of her charms was out of keeping with her hitherto accepted notion of what a minister should be; but that admiration had seemed wholly natural to her and not at all surprising, while his cold-blooded elucidation of his position and his wishes shocked her and distinctly lowered him even in her shallow estimation. This feeling cheapening him in her mind brought him nearer to her.

"Are you not popular now?" she asked.

"Yes, but this is an ephemeral popularity. It will die out presently, unless I take proper precautions, and it is for the sake of such precautionary measures that I must know those about me. You see I put very great confidence in my little friend," he said, again kissing her hand.

"It is not misplaced," said Mrs. Rosewood, with a feeling of conscious rectitude.

"I know it," said Mr. Ringrose, "and now, Sister, tell me about Sister Watterson. She is very highly thought of everywhere, is she not?"

"Aunt Sadie? Yes, indeed."

"Is not she deeply religious?"

"I don't know that. I believe so, though. She is very good."

"Which means the same thing you would say?" said his reverence smiling and shaking his head. "And her brother, the great politician?"

"He is a good man," she replied, in a slightly constrained voice.

"He is generally so considered?"

"Yes. Everybody respects him—admires him—loves him almost as they love Aunt Sadie; only everybody is a little afraid of him. Not afraid, you know, only—only—"

"Awed by his presence? I can understand that. He is very quiet, is he not? Never interferes anywhere? I thought so. He is very powerful I find. I should say that a word from him would go farther than one from Brother Marblemore. But he is not a man to speak that word, I believe. General Hamilton is his warm friend, is he not? He never attends church, I understand? A perfect heathen, and Brother Marblemore's bitter enemy?"

Mrs. Rosewood nodded, as she had nodded or shook her head according to the nature of his foregoing questions.

"And Brother Marblemore? What kind of a man would you call him now?"

"A rich one."

Mr. Ringrose laughed and Mrs. Rosewood laughed with him.

"Of course you know that," said Mrs. Rosewood, smiling. "But he is very much richer than you imagine. It is said that he is worth ten million dollars—some say twenty, some even go as far as fifty."

"Which means probably two or three at the utmost."

"I don't know. He has more than fifty banks scattered through the State, branches of this one, and he is besides interested in railroads and things."

"And the man?"

"Oh, he is very stiff and proud, though I have heard that he was not always so. It is said that he was much different when he was a poor man, and that he has become this way only since he became rich."

"He at least is happily married," said his reverence, regarding the animated little woman from beneath half-closed lids.

"I suppose so. He was married twice, you know."

"No, indeed, I did not know," cried the minister in simulated surprise.

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Rosewood, delighted with the astonishment he showed. "Clara is his daughter by a first marriage and Elmer is his stepson."

"Indeed! You overwhelm me!"

"She has been married three times!"

"Mrs. Marblemore!"

"Yes, indeed; Elmer is her son by her first marriage."

"But he calls himself Marblemore."

"Yes, he took the banker's name upon his mother's marriage. It was Mr. Marblemore's wish. She is related to the Wattersons through her second marriage. Her second husband was Richard Watterson, Mr. Watterson's cousin, and Sherman Watterson's father. So that she is Sherman's stepmother, which makes Elmer and Sherman stepbrothers."

"Why, this is quite interesting," cried Mr. Ringrose with a smile.

"But the most interesting part remains," said Mrs. Rosewood, significantly. "Mrs. Marblemore, you must know, does not belong to Clarenceburg at all. She lived in Ohio somewhere. There she married and lost her first husband, and there she met Richard Watterson. He was very wild, young Richard, I have heard. He was obliged to leave Clarenceburg on account of some trouble. He went away; and after roaming about the world for some time, he settled in Ohio. He was a physician. He married, but lost his wife, and was living alone with his little son, Sherman, when he met the present Mrs. Marblemore, then a widow with an only son, Elmer. They were married, I understand, on the third day after their first meeting. Their married life was very unhappy, owing to the two boys. Richard could not bear Elmer, and Mrs. Marblemore hated Sherman. Richard died after awhile, and she came to Clarenceburg to make her home with the Wattersons, bring-

ing Elmer with her, but not Sherman. Him she had left behind."

"Left behind!" cried Mr. Ringrose, raising both white hands in smiling amazement.

Mrs. Rosewood pursed her lips thinly, then smiled with bitter significance.

"Yes. Mr. Watterson knew nothing of his cousin's doings during all those years. They knew nothing of his first marriage and, of course, could not know of Sherman's existence. It was easy to deceive them."

"And did Mrs. Marblemore deceive them? How?"

"By leaving Sherman behind, and saying nothing about him," replied the little widow with mouth severely drawn.

"Impossible! Why should she do this monstrous thing?"

"She was poor; she loved her son; she hated her stepson. By this means she assured herself a good home, and her son a splendid future."

"You overwhelm me!" said Mr. Ringrose again. "But how did it all end? Sherman is here, I see, and Elmer also; and both, apparently, in their proper places."

"Mrs. Marblemore became very sick about six years ago. She was given up by the doctors, and when she thought that she was going to die, she confessed the wrong she had done. I nursed her during her long illness; that is how I know this. Aunt Sadie and Mr. Watterson were horrified, as you may imagine. They instituted a thorough search for the missing boy, and found him after a time in an orphan's home. Mr. Watterson at once brought him to Clarenceburg. That was, as I have said, six years ago—ten years after her coming here. She had married well in the meantime, and had provided for her son, but she never thought of repairing the cruel wrong done to the poor deserted orphan until the fear of death was upon her."

Mr. Ringrose sat for a time gazing in thoughtful silence at the carpet. The little widow, in quite an animated glow, regarded him with smiling eyes; quite charmed with the effect she had made upon the handsome minister.

"The Wattersons have forgiven her, it seems," said Mr. Ringrose, after a time. "They are close friends."

"Oh, yes. Aunt Sadie was deeply shocked, but she cannot bear ill-will towards anyone; as for Mr. Watterson,"—she concluded, with a shrug, implying unending forbearance on the part of the big man.

"She married the great banker for love, of course?" suggested his reverence.

Mrs. Rosewood pursed her lips and slowly shook her head.

"I don't think so," she said.

"For his money? Come, now, Sister, surely not?"

Again the little woman pursed her lips and shook her head.

"I don't think so."

"What? Why this is mysterious," cried the minister gayly.

"She does not care for him at all, and she certainly hates money. She spends it freely enough—not that she cares for the spending of it, but as I have often thought, because she has a kind of spite against it."

"Then why should she have married him?" asked the minister, thoughtfully.

Mrs. Rosewood shook her head. Judging her wealthy neighbor by herself, she had long been of the opinion that Mary had really loved Mr. Watterson, but that stung by his stern coldness she had in a fit of rage thrown herself into the arms of her present husband. But this theory the little woman had sufficient prudence to keep to herself.

"He worships her," she said.

"Ah!"

"And he is very proud of her."

"Ah!"

"She is very beautiful," said Mrs. Rosewood, a little wistfully.

"She, too, is cold and proud?" suggested the minister, who seemed lost in deep thought.

"Oh, no. She may be cold, but she is not proud. She is friendly with every one. She never goes anywhere except to Aunt Sadie's, but every one is welcome to call upon her, and she treats all her neighbors with equal kindness. She

is as much thought of as Aunt Sadie—only in a different way."

"A kind of Grand Dame, while Aunt Sadie is a Lady Bountiful," suggested Mr. Ringrose, smiling.

Mrs. Rosewood nodded with a rather bitter compression of the mouth.

"I have learned much that will be of assistance to me from my little friend," said his reverence, smiling, "but above all I have learned that you, Sister Rosewood, are a very generous friend and a good-natured critic."

"Oh, I've got lots of enemies," said the little widow, laughing. "Only you haven't asked me about them."

"Some other time will do. Just now I wish to know if you will take an active part in my entertainment."

"I don't mind."

"Then I can rely upon you. Perhaps I shall have nothing better to offer you than the part of a flower girl, but it is all in a good cause, and," he added with an admiring glance, "what a lovely flower girl you would make."

"Oh, Mr. Ringrose!" said the little widow, in a tone of protest.

"It is true, and why should not I speak the truth? I may call upon my little friend and confidant again?"

"I shall be pleased."

His reverence squeezed her hand ardently, as they stood for a moment together at parting, then, with a sudden, quick movement he bent down and kissed her lips. It would seem that she had half expected this caress, for while she colored and drew back a little for mere propriety's sake, she burst into a little laugh and put her hand over her mouth as if to protect it from a second attack, regarding the minister in the meantime with a look eloquent of arch complacency.

"You should not," she said, as he stood holding her in his arms, smiling down at her.

"Why not?" he said tenderly.

"You a minister! Fie!"

"It is Human Nature to succumb to temptation," said his reverence with much solemnity, "and the temptation was very great. Human Nature is weak, my dear Sister—very weak and erring, and when temptation besets us we must

give way. It is not strange, nor surprising that I a minister should yield to this weakness, because I partake of the same Human Nature as my brothers. Nor is it wrong save under man-made laws to which we all submit under compulsion. Nature's laws are much sweeter, and they impel me to do that which I have done—and do now."

He bent down again, and again pressed his bearded lips to hers. She did not draw back now, feeling probably some stirring of long dormant passion at coming into contact with this strong, handsome man.

"Ah! Human Nature, Human Nature," continued his reverence, shaking his head mournfully, " you are responsible for many things; things sweet and things bitter. To you are due the happiness, the disappointments, the errors and the weaknesses of mankind. Were you not weak, Man would be strong; were you not erring, Man would be pure. But subject to your inexorable promptings we are, alas! all erring and all sinful."

Evidently again beset by the weakness he so deplored, he again bent down as it were absently and kissed the pretty little widow, who, far from withdrawing now, met him half way.

She sat beside her window looking out when he had gone, thinking deeply. Perhaps she had come to the turning point in her life. She was very lonely and unhappy, a disappointed little woman given to bitter musing and reflection. She could have married a score of times, but her ambitious hope in one direction had led her to turn her back upon her many suitors until none now remained. Her hopes blasted, her suitors gone, without riches, friends or the consolation that infirm characters often find in religion, she saw in the future nothing but dark loneliness and despair. She thought of the handsome minister; she knew very well what his attentions meant. They could mean but one thing coming from such a source. And why not? What had she to live for? to care for? Nothing! She was seized with a spirit of reckless abandon sitting there. What cared she for the world? It cared nothing for her. It had shown her nothing but unkindness, she declared bitterly, comparing her lot with that of the more fortunately placed women around

her. Let him come to her with soft words, with kisses and embraces, she would receive him and them and enjoy life to the full!

It was getting dark without, but still she sat there musing these things, and did not move even when she heard Rosie returning from her work. She came in all aglow from her walk, tripping lightly across the dining-room into her own little chamber. How pretty the girl was, thought the little widow, with a pang for her own lost beauty. She was very handsome indeed—for her age, but that was not Rosie's age. Rosie was an exact counterpart of what she had been at her age. Beside her blooming little daughter, the youthful copy of what she once had been, she looked the middle-aged woman she was, fat and faded, and all of forty years of age, though she was barely thirty-six. Knowing this she hated the child with an astonishing virulence. She never went out with her daughter, never was seen in public with the blooming little girl, and in private she treated her with an aversion amounting almost to tyranny. Rosie bore with it patiently. She was a timid child, very soft-hearted and gentle.

"Where are you, Mama?" said Rosie, coming into the parlor. "Sitting here all alone?"

She spoke timidly, like one uncertain of her reception; nor did she approach her mother to kiss her.

"Light the lamp, will you?" was Mrs. Rosewood's reply. "I am not feeling well."

Rosie did her bidding, bustling about with tremendous ardor, as if to conciliate her mother's angry frown.

"We had a very busy day today, Mama," she said, seating herself near her mother, upon the chair which His Reverence had but just vacated. She began to chatter away, recounting all the little incidents, comic or tragic, that had enlivened her day, to which Mrs. Rosewood, still busied with her thoughts, listened in an abstracted manner. Receiving neither encouragement nor attention, Rosie became silent after a time, and went tripping into the kitchen to assist Lotty in preparing the evening meal.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH LITTLE ROSIE ATTENDS A PLAY.

Though her home life was anything but happy, little Rosie bore herself in the face of the world with becoming gayety and cheerfulness. You could not ruffle her temper nor mar the bright glance of her eyes, nor provoke one impatient word or movement from the smiling little maid. She was quietly happy. Her companions at the store, all girls of her own age, were her warm friends. They were all equally happy in the heyday of blooming youth, pulsating with life and vitality, and overflowing with love for all the world, with oceans in store for the longed-for Prince Charming. They could hardly contain themselves, so full of life and the joy of life were they. They were constantly smiling at each other, and casting bewitching glances of arch delight at the mirrors flashing all around them, forever giggling and bursting into peals of laughter, darting here and there with lightning-like movements in attending to the wants of customers, joyous, smiling, coquettish little creatures, full of fun and vim and vanity.

Murly was a shrewd business man who knew the value of bright eyes and brisk youth behind his glittering counters; his prettiest girls presided over the masculine finery and waited upon the male youth of Clarenceburg. Wise Murly! Who would go to Oppenheim's across the way to purchase a tie, for example, once having bought of little Rosie? Obviously no one—no young man at least. They came again and again, the rogues, to gaze into Rosie's shy dark eyes—and to buy more ties. Some danced giddily on the verge of bankruptcy to lay in ties. Rosie felt very guilty when she thought of the bales and bales of ties stored away by several impassioned young men of her acquaintance. Not that Rosie encouraged them to such extravagance.

No! No! But what could she do? She could not find it in her heart to frown upon her admirers. She was a

sunny little woman, fond of showing her pretty teeth in smiling good humor. So she smiled and Murly smiled with her—and increased his stock of ties. No need for Rosie to recommend her wares. Men asked not if the colors would hold, if the styles were up to date. Not they! They did not care. Beneath Rosie's alluring glance there was no room for doubt. They came again and again, came in dozens, in scores, and Rosie replenished her depleted stock from the numberless boxes on the shelves behind her counter, and demurely awaited others. Wicked little Rosie!

She was strictly business-like in business hours, was little Rosie. If she spoke at all it was in answer to some question. The moment the theatre was mentioned or a party spoken of by a too forward youth, Rosie's glance became freezingly cold, her smile vanished and her little forehead puckered up into a prodigious frown. But still they came and persistently assailed the little maid with undesired attentions. It was most annoying. Rosie did not want their company anywhere and it gave her pain to repeatedly refuse this or that sighing youngster, but they would not let her alone.

There was one persistent young man in particular whom Rosie detested, a pale, slender, serious young fellow, a drug clerk, Thomas by name, but facetiously called Featherbone, after his employer, by Rosie's mischievous companions. He had a mania for impossible ties, this young man. He squandered his weekly wages on ties, coming in almost every evening to purchase a new one, and spending an unconscionable long time in selecting it. The girls chaffed Rosie unmercifully about him, and Rosie in consequence felt more unkindly disposed towards this young man than towards all her other admirers combined. The moment he entered the store there ensued a great whispering and giggling. Girls nudged each other and smiled across at Rosie; and when the stricken youth was bending over the little maid's counter, stage whispers came floating to Rosie's tingling ears, remarking upon the approaching wedding and coming bridal tour. All of which annoyed Rosie very much and made her manner towards young Mr. Thomas very cold and constrained.

Although Rosie is constantly referred to as Little Rosie in these pages, she was by no means diminutive in stature. She was fully as tall as her mother, coming well up to Myrtle's chin. But she was so exquisitely modeled, so daintily rounded in form and withal so neat and trim a little figure, that she was everywhere spoken of as Little Rosie.

She was charming with her nice, round, rosy little face and air of smiling innocence. She was shy and reserved, and silent always, having not a word to say for herself at any time—was as quiet with her chattering companions as in older and graver company. A pretty doll, the women called her, and this was very likely a truer estimate of Rosie than many another. Certainly she was not bright nor witty. She had not two ideas in her little head beyond adorning her little person, but she was truthful, honest and cheerful, possessing her share of vanity, no doubt, but with a proportionate share of modesty to balance and offset it.

Yes, little Rosie was very happy in spite of hard work and the confinement entailed by her employment; happier just now perhaps than she had been at any other period of her life. For her soul was filled with love. A little bird was singing in her bosom through all the livelong day, and the burden of the song was Elmer. Her heart swelled with passion at the thought of him. Her bosom rose and fell in stormy emotion, and her eyes filled with tears at the casual mention of his name. He was most devoted to her, was Elmer. He singled her out everywhere, accompanied her home from parties where they met by chance or by previous arrangement. He walked home with her from church, coming at the last moment for no other purpose—for Elmer was of the ungodly, a reputed reprobate of the blackest dye. Rosie did not believe half of the stories told of him, and smiled indulgently at such as seemed altogether probable, as faults common to young men.

One evening when the working day had but an hour to run, Rosie stood idly behind her counter, patiently waiting the hour of release. There were few people in the store, and the girls were cutting up in consequence, or standing together chatting, for Murly was by no means a strict dis-

ciplinarian. Rosie, having nothing else to do, was touching up her wares, arranging the cravats and ties in prettier rows, when she perceived a sudden commotion among her companions. Little bursts of laughter came floating to her, intermingled with whisperings in which her name was mentioned. Little Rosie, curious to see what it all meant, stood on tip-toe, and stretched her little neck in an effort to clear an intervening show-case, and saw—Elmer! She felt herself blushing and tingling to the tips of her fingers. She bent down hastily to glance under the counter and thus account for her heightened color when she looked again. Yes, it was Elmer. He was going from counter to counter in search of the tie department, the droll rogue! He paused to speak to all the girls, taking pains to explain to each his needs in ties, his tastes in ties, his favorite shades and colors. He had heard so much of Murly's excellent ties, he said. He had been told of the beauty and grace of Murly's. girls, and would she kindly remain quiet for a moment, very quiet and grave, as he wished to verify the reports? All this with a preternaturally solemn countenance. The girls were dodging under counters, almost choking with laughter, and Rosie was standing behind her counter all trembling with impatience, and terror, and happiness immeasurable.

"Why, Rosie," he said, coming up, "I'm *so* surprised!"

He was more than surprised, amazed and delighted, he said. He insisted on shaking hands with the little maid, and did so in the face of her giggling companions to Rosie's great confusion. He inquired, with an air of great solicitude, after her mother, and expressed himself as highly delighted with the general state of that lady's health, as reported by Rosie. The evening was rather cool, he said, in proof of which he showed the long raglan he wore, which became his tall, slender figure exceedingly well, Rosie thought. Then he turned to the ties. What color did Rosie consider most becoming? Rosie did not know—color was a matter of taste. To be sure, but surely she had an opinion? No, Rosie had no opinion. But she *must* make a suggestion. Then, Rosie thought shyly that blue would look very nice—a pale blue like that one. Just the thing!

Blue was Elmer's favorite color. He doted on blue; he adored blue. Blue had become a passion with him ever since he had seen Rosie dressed in that glorious color once upon a time—oh, years ago. Oh dear, he shouldn't talk that way, he really shouldn't! Why not? The—the girls were listening. Hang the girls! Oh, dear me, no! He really mustn't.

"Which shall I take, Rosie?" asked Elmer, smiling.

"I—I can't say," said Rosie, shaking her head, "really I can't."

"Then I shan't take any," declared Elmer.

"Would—would this one do?" asked Rosie, forgetting all about his favorite color in her confusion and holding up a tie of flaming hue for his inspection.

"Do you think it becoming?" said Elmer, holding it in position.

Of course it was becoming! How handsome he was, so tall and pale and slender, with his thick yellow hair and sunny blue eyes, and that smile, that wonderful smile that made Rosie wish herself his servant, his very slave. He was graceful and elegant, rather than strong, but broad and manly too.

"Well, Rosie," said Elmer, catching just a glimpse of her dark eyes as he looked up.

"It looks very nice, sir," said Rosie.

"Sir!" cried Elmer, frowning.

"I—I meant Elmer."

"Thank you, Rosie. Would you like to go to the theater tonight—with me?"

"To the theater," cried Rosie, showing her delight with refreshing openness. He had never asked her company there before, and until a girl goes with her lover to the theater how can she consider him her very own?

"Would you care to go with me, little Rosie? It is the first play of the season. Will you go?"

"Yes, Elmer, I shall be very happy," said Rosie, in a low voice.

"Well, I'll be around then. Good-by, little Rosie."

He raised his hat with incomparable grace, and going across the aisle, he gravely deposited the money for his

purchase before Lizzie Ferguson, who, giggling like a mad thing, declined it.

"I'm not the cashier, sir," she said, saucily.

"Oh," said Elmer, and promptly turned to the next girl and the next, until he had quite made the rounds of the store. One and all declined his offering. They followed him with bright eyes and laughing lips, for girls dearly love a droll young fellow, who can carry on his drollery with a gravity of manner approaching solemnity, and Elmer was a past master in the art. His astonishment at the general head-shaking was comical. He had never met such very strange girls before, he said. His experience with young ladies had hitherto been the very reverse—you could not give them money enough. He was amazed at their disinterestedness, absolutely dumbfounded. However, he reached the cashier's desk in due course of time, and there succeeded in disposing of his money and, with a last smiling glance around, he went away.

"Oh, Rosie, will you invite us to the wedding?" asked Lizzie.

"When is it to be, Rosie?" demanded Minnie Kelly.

They buzzed about Rosie like so many bees, each more curious than the other. Rosie evaded their questions as much as possible, and waited in trembling impatience for the closing knell to sound. When the bell did ring, after what seemed to Rosie an eternity of time, she hurried into her littel jacket with all her might, and then homeward. Although it was early in September, the weather was decidedly cool, by reason of one of those premature winter blasts which probably would vanish on the morrow, leaving summer to reign once more in mild and cheerful radiance. But Rosie lightly tripping her way through the darkening street did not mind the cold at all.

She reached home in a very short time, and mounting the veranda was just on the point of opening the side door when it opened inwardly and some one coming out ran into her. She looked up startled, and was surprised to find Mr. Ringrose confronting her. Mrs. Rosewood was directly behind him, holding the door.

"Why, it's little Rosie," exclaimed the minister, gayly.

He took the little girl's hand in his and stepped back into the room, leading her. It was dark within. Mrs. Rosewood struck a match at the moment and began fumbling with the lamp that stood usually in the center of the dining table.

"I just stepped in a moment to consult with Sister Rosewood upon some necessary church work," continued His Reverence, "and what is my good fortune but to meet with little Rosie."

Rosie, without exactly knowing why, did not like his manner. It was too familiar by half. She withdrew her hand in some impatience and stood back a little.

"Go and get your jacket off, child," said Mrs. Rosewood.

Her gentle tone of voice surprised Rosie agreeably. She went into her room, wondering a little at her mother's unwonted paleness and the uncommon brightness of her eyes. When she came out again Mrs. Rosewood was alone.

"Where's Lotty, Mama?" asked Rosie, looking into the darkened kitchen.

"She's gone home," replied Mrs. Rosewood, crossly. "Help me with the supper and don't ask questions."

The kitchen fire was quite out, and a new one had to be built. Rosie set to work with a will, and went bustling about with great briskness, humming so gayly at her work that Mrs. Rosewood looked at her from time to time in surprise. The supper was soon steaming upon the table, and they sat down to it, Rosie smiling merrily and Mrs. Rosewood with something less of peevishness in her expression of countenance.

"You are merry, child," said the widow, presently.

"I am, Mama," said Rosie, turning her bright eyes upon her mother, "and I have reason to be."

"Have you, indeed? And may I ask the reason?"

"Well," said Rosie, balancing a spoon on the tip of one rosy finger, "you have been very kind to me for one thing."

"I was not aware of it," replied her mother, dryly.

"Oh, but I am. That makes me happy, because you are always so cross, aren't you, Mama?"

"Don't be silly."

"But you are."

"Well, I am then."

"And then I am going to the theater tonight," said Rosie, her eyes dancing.

"Alone?" asked her mother, ironically.

"No, Mama," replied Rosie, saucily. "In the very best of company."

"Whose?"

"Guess, Mama."

"Oh bother!"

"Elmer's, Mama."

Rosie regarded her mother with very large eyes, her cheeks blushing and a smile playing around her lips.

"Upon my word, but you are pretty child," said Mrs. Rosewood, surveying her daughter in a kind of astonishment. Rosie, delighted beyond measure, bounded up and, coming around to her mother, threw her arms around the widow's neck.

"So you are going with Elmer?" said Mrs. Rosewood, putting Rosie's arms away gently, but decidedly.

"With Elmer, Mama; and we must hurry through supper or I'll be late, and that would be too bad the very first time, wouldn't it, Mama? I don't think I shall change my dress."

"Goodness, child!" cried her mother. "Are you crazy? Of course you must change your dress. Put on the very best you have—the cherry colored silk. I will help you as soon as we finish supper."

Rosie was too happy to eat. She nibbled daintily at a bit of bread and drank some tea, then hurried into her room to dress, Mrs. Rosewood accompanying her. They were almost ready when Elmer's knock was heard at the front door. Mrs. Rosewood, carrying a lamp into the tiny parlor, went to meet her daughter's caller.

"Good evening, Mrs. Rosewood," said Elmer, looking past her in search of Rosie. His rich merry voice came to Rosie in her chamber, creating such a stir of emotion in the little maid's breast that she could hardly finish her dressing for trembling happiness.

"Rosie will be out in a minute," said Mrs. Rosewood, "won't you sit down a while?"

"Thanks."

He seemed rather embarrassed with her, but seated himself sprawling in a creaking rocker.

"Rather cold out," he said.

"How are you getting along in your part of the entertainment?" asked Mrs. Rosewood.

He had carelessly agreed to take the principal male rôle in the much-talked of church entertainment, having had experience in amateur theatricals.

"I haven't looked at it yet," he said, carelessly. "It'll take Ringrose ten years to get around the stiff-necked members who are opposed to the thing, and another ten years then to get things in shape. In my opinion it'll never come off, and so mother thinks—so what's the use of bothering?"

"That would be too bad."

Rosie came in quietly at this moment, casting a shy, smiling glance at her handsome lover. Elmer straightened up with a start at her entrance, and sat in wide-eyed admiration regarding her. She looked extraordinarily beautiful in her pretty red dress, all covered with cunningly disposed ruffles and flounces of ribbon and of lace. She wore a wide-brimmed felt hat, matching the dress in color, with a single curling feather in the crown. Mrs. Rosewood looked her over critically and nodded approvingly. Elmer's eyes glowed with unnatural brightness as he gazed at the little girl.

"Are you ready, Rosie?" he asked.

She had but to draw on her little jacket and gloves. With the first he gallantly assisted, and when her gloves were tightly drawn on the little hands, she nodded brightly up at him, and they went away together.

"I had no idea that you were going to make such a fine appearance, Rosie," said Elmer, pressing the little gloved hand tenderly.

He showed himself a gallant escort, being very careful of his pretty companion, as they walked along, cautioning her softly at crossings, and guiding her safely and gently past all obstructions. Rosie's heart bounded with joy and

pride and happiness. Other people were on the street, old and young of both sexes, for the most part bound in the same direction and doubtless for the same goal.

"Had I known it," continued Elmer, "I would have brought a carriage for you."

"Oh, dear no, Elmer," said Rosie, pressing his arm just the least little bit. "Oh, dear me, no."

"No, little Rosie," he replied, smiling, "you would rather walk with me?"

"Yes, Elmer."

Then they walked on for a time in silence. Rosie did not feel the cold at all in her pretty little jacket, the collar of which was turned up around her neck, her round, rosy face looking out of it like a modest little flower. Sometimes she looked up shyly at Elmer, smiling in pure joy and happiness, and always encountered his passionate gaze regarding her; but strangely enough his open tenderness did not deepen her shyness, but rather emboldened her to look up again and again, and to show her pearly teeth in smiling pleasure at meeting his kind glance. She squeezed his arm gently and pressed close to him as they walked.

My! What throngs of people were passing into the theater, all of Clarenceburg surely, and half the country people around. Young farm lads, grave business men, mechanics and professional men of the city met and mingled here on equal footing, each accompanied by wife or sweetheart, and all bent on an evening's recreation. Rosie knew them all, and felt them a happy, smiling host of friends on this beautiful evening. Elmer, with rare precaution, had secured seats earlier in the evening—well up in front they were, too, in just the spot which Rosie would have chosen. Sitting there in the midst of the gay throng the little maid could glance from time to time into the neighboring boxes and note later arrivals there, and mark the newer features of the ladies' dresses, and the presence and bearing of the men. Aunt Sadie, who was passionately fond of the theater, and always early, sat in her box with her boy and Myrtle. Rosie timidly called Elmer's attention to them, and was surprised to see the scowl with which he regarded them.

"They are always together," he muttered between his teeth.

"Who, Elmer?" said Rosie, surprised at his moody expression.

"Look at Aunt Sadie," said Elmer, by way of reply, smiling that rare smile which Rosie thought so wonderfully sweet, "dear, good, innocent Aunt Sadie. She is happiness personified."

Aunt Sadie sat half screened by the curtain, with her boy by her side, sitting between Myrtle and his adoring aunt. Her eyes roved from time to time out over the numberless happy faces, but always returned proudly to her precious boy as if to invite the collective gaze of all present to his manifold perfections. She smiled at this or that little friend, nodded greetings to the more sedate, and in return received numberless smiling nods and airy kisses from loving neighbors and adoring children. The Marblemore box was still vacant, nor did those exalted personages appear until well into the first act.

Rosie could hardly contain herself for sheer happiness. Her eyes shone brilliantly in the soft light of the myriad globes around about them, her cheeks glowed like fresh roses, her teeth glittered with such dazzling whiteness against her scarlet lips that Elmer's passion rose with every passing moment. She had removed her jacket, with Elmer's gallant assistance, and also her little round hat, standing forth in her pretty dress a ravishing figure. The red and white of her cheek and neck and brow shone all the more dazzling by contrast with the glossy blackness of her wavy tresses.

"You are very, very beautiful, Rosie," said Elmer, in a voice which, like his eyes, was passion-laden. He did not smile as one paying a compliment, but looked down at her very earnestly. Rosie returning his gaze felt an unaccountable quaking at the heart as of fear. But no, it was not fear but happiness! The girl was hardly conscious of her own great beauty. She had all her life been used to seeing the same, round little face looking out from her mirror. She thought well of that little face and considered it only natural that others should think well of it. She was a

pleasant little woman, having a friendly word and a smile for every one, and so the admiring glances she met with on all sides being to her mind merely expressions of friendly regard, were not at all out of place. She was a little surprised at Elmer's earnestness, and very proud and glad of his admiration.

But the play!

It was a rather amusing concoction, designed purely for laughter. The scenes were laid in Scotland. The plot revolved around a marriage performed secretly without the aid of law or clergy. The lovers simply clasped hands and repeated the marriage service, and it later transpires that this marriage is perfectly legal and binding, and through it the happy pair outwit the villain and come into an enormous fortune. In the end, for mere form's sake, they are married a second time with vast pomp and circumstance in the presence of family and friends.

Rosie followed the story with breathless interest. She was charmed with the outcome. She laughed with great glee at the drolleries of the faithful old servant, and shuddered at the cold-blooded attempts of the villain. Elmer, too, greatly admired the novel manner in which the lucky hero outwitted the plotting villain. It was so simple, he said. So it was, Rosie owned. So easy of accomplishment! Why, any one could marry that way! So they could, nodded Rosie.

"Why shouldn't we marry that way, Rosie?" whispered Elmer.

Good gracious! How Rosie did blush! How she laughed, glancing up at him with tender, shy glances! How handsome he was; how sweet and lovable! He repeated the question, and again and again recurred to it; but of course he did not mean it. Rosie was quite sure that he did not mean it. It was only his way. He was fond of teasing. She laughed very gayly, and returned his passionate glances with looks equally tender. She felt merry and light-hearted, and oh, so happy!

"Wasn't it done prettily?" he said.

"It was, Elmer," replied Rosie.

"And it proved perfectly legal and binding."

"So it did," agreed Rosie, "but they were married the second time, you know."

"Of course, for mere form's sake. We could do that, too," he added, smiling.

Rosie laughed again, thinking him very droll and very sweet.

"We'll get married in the regular way later on, Rosie, and have a grand wedding, just as they did in the play," whispered that droll Elmer.

Rosie laughed merrily, but would not commit herself to any such absurd proposal, but thought it very sweet and good of him to talk of their possible union, even though it was all in fun. It was a most enjoyable evening, the happiest, Rosie thought, she had ever spent in her life; and when at the end of the second act Elmer asked her if she would like to visit Aunt Sadie in her box, Rosie sprang up in great eagerness and glee. Aunt Sadie received them in her usual kind manner.

"My gracious, child!" she said, regarding Rosie in wonder, "but you are wonderfully pretty tonight."

Rosie thought it very strange that this astonishing fact should be a matter of general surprise that evening. She did not realize the change that a few short weeks had wrought in her. A light now blazed in her heart, a glowing beam of brightness, which shone through her outer self, lighting up her features to a beauty undreamed of by the little maid.

They did not again return to their old seats, but remained in Aunt Sadie's box through the third and closing act, Rosie sitting beside Myrtle in the seat which Sherman had surrendered to her, and Elmer standing behind Aunt Sadie's chair. Aunt Sadie beamed down at her little friend and glanced from time to time at Elmer, expressing in her kind, brown eyes the utmost friendliness and good-will for the happiness of both. Rosie was conscious of Clara's eyes across the way and of Mrs. Marblemore's uneasy gaze, and she returned their cold glances timidly. They begrudged her Elmer, but she had a right to Elmer's company as she had a right to his regard if she could win it. The box was small, and their presence rather overcrowded it, so Myrtle

sent Sherman away, telling him that it was his duty to pay his respects to Mrs. and Miss Marblemore.

"I won't stay long, Myrtle," declared Sherman, rebelliously, "and mind I'm going home with you."

"Yes, Sherman," said Myrtle, sweetly.

Rosie saw him presently standing behind Clara's chair, glowering down on her.

"Poor, dear boy," murmured Myrtle, laughing.

"Do you like plays of this kind, Myrtle?" asked Elmer.

"Yes, it is all very amusing," replied Myrtle, smiling. She wondered at his intense gaze and strange expression of countenance as he glanced from her to Rosie and back again. She wore a very pretty and becoming evening gown of her favorite color—grey, which ended in a collar of soft, white lace, fitting snugly around her throat.

"Aunt Sadie, too, finds it all very amusing," mused Elmer, turning to her.

"Surely Elmer," said Aunt Sadie, settling herself with an air of great enjoyment as she gently smoothed the folds of her magnificent black velvet gown. "It's all such fun. Of course, we know how absurd and impossible it all is; that's why we can enjoy it. Life—real life if truthfully depicted is scarcely amusing. But a story such as this is meant for laughter. It is a kind of puzzle for grown-up children; a very complicated, ludicrous, absurd puzzle, but such fun!"

The play came to an end, as all plays will; the curtain rose for the last time in answer to the uproarious applause, and the people began crowding out through the wide doors.

"Supposing we have a nice little supper, Rosie?" said that incomparable Elmer.

Rosie was feeling quite hungry, having eaten but a morsel of bread since her simple luncheon, which she carried in a bit of brown paper to the store, so she assented joyously to the nice little supper, saying prudently, however:

"Do you wish it, Elmer—really and truly wish it?"

"I certainly do," said Elmer, smiling.

So they made their way to Trainor's restaurant, a resort for the more well-to-do and fashionable. Rosie was sur-

prised at the number of people gathered there at so late an hour. Elmer, with the air of one well acquainted with the place, led the way to the rear, and seated his timid little companion in a kind of alcove. Nothing could equal the grandeur and grace with which he commanded the waiters about. Rosie was enchanted by his magnificence, and sat as demure as a kitten, listening to his sparkling conversation, admiring him hugely all the time. She ate right heartily, too, and was not in the least ashamed of the healthy appetite she exhibited. Elmer poured her a glass of wine, which she at first firmly refused to touch, but he besought her so earnestly, looking at her so entreatingly the while with his dear blue eyes that she finally gave way and sipped a little of it, and liked it so well that little by little she drank it all. Elmer would have refilled her glass, but she declined with such determination that he desisted in his endeavor. He drank a good deal himself, however, barely tasting the food, but pouring glass after glass of the rich wine down his handsome throat and calling for more. He became proportionately brighter, gayer, and so exceedingly droll at times that Rosie was thrown into spasms of laughter. Perhaps the rich food, the gay surroundings and unaccustomed wine inflamed her somewhat, but certainly she became less reserved and more talkative than she had ever been in his company. She told of her companions at the store, of Murly's comical little hobbies, of her friends, her work, her life at home, her mother and so on, mingling the whole in a confused babble wholly charming, because of the narrator's sweet little treble and the arch little airs she put on, the flashing of her teeth, and soft, alluring glances of her shy, dark eyes. She possessed a thousand little coquettish airs and graces which shone forth with charming effect in her unwonted animation. Elmer sat watching her every arch movement, his eyes eloquent with passion. He sprang up abruptly after a time, wholly unable to endure the sight with calmness.

"It is time to go home, Rosie," he said, in a husky voice.

There were still many people gathered around the glittering tables, but the character of the gathering had somehow changed since their coming. To tell the truth

Rosie did not like the looks of the young women at all, and she shrank away with a feeling of terror at the bold gaze of the men. She knew them all, however, and knew them for men who were spoken of with bated breath, and little giggling shrieks by her girl friends. She recognized several old schoolmates among the young women, her friends once, but spoken of now, if at all, in hushed voices at the store. She looked up at Elmer in surprise and horror, and pressed closer to him as they passed. One or two spoke to her, calling her by name, others smiled and waved their hands as to a familiar friend. She glanced at the clock over the door. It was nearly one.

"Let us hurry, Elmer," she said in an agitated voice. "Oh do let us hurry!"

"Yes, sure Rosie," he replied.

But he did not hurry. On the contrary he walked very slowly, and despite her feeble protest, fell to devouring her little hand with kisses. Rosie felt a great wave of tenderness come over her, and she pressed closer to him, allowing her hand to remain passively within his grasp, thrilling beneath the warmth of his caresses. The street was very dark and wholly deserted, but her eyes soon became accustomed to the darkness and presently she saw her mother's little white cottage near at hand.

"Did you have a pleasant evening, Rosie?" asked Elmer.

"Yes, indeed, Elmer," replied Rosie.

"We will go again, eh?"

"But we won't stay so late, Elmer, next time. If Aunt Sadie knew that I was out so late she would be very, very sorry."

"You are my little girl now, Rosie, aren't you? Aren't you my little girl now, Rosie?"

He repeated the query any number of times, bending down the better to see her face.

"Answer me, Rosie," he said. "Aren't you my little girl?"

"I—I don't know, Elmer."

"But you are," said Elmer, tenderly. "Say you are, say it little Rosie."

"I am, Elmer," said Rosie.

They paused at the foot of the lawn, and Rosie, bidding him good night, tried to withdraw her hand from his embrace.

"Wait," said Elmer, continuing up the walk by her side and pausing only at the wide stoop of the veranda, "I've got something for you, my little Rosie."

He slipped a ring on her third finger with the words, and Rosie, feeling its pressure, cried out in a rapture of joy. She could see the glitter of the jewels even in the darkness, but she thought nothing of that, but of what the ring meant, of the sweet avowal that ought to accompany such a gift. She looked up at him with shining eyes, her lips parted and bosom heaving—waiting. No words came, however. Instead he seized her in his arms and kissed her passionately, kissed her lips, her cheeks, her eyes and lips again with a passion so overwhelming in its fierce intensity that Rosie remained breathless and passive in his embrace. But recovering after a time she freed herself, pushing him from her with both little hands pressing upon his breast, and stood back looking up at him waiting for the words. But again no words came. Elmer stood regarding her with a smile of triumph, but silent, and it suddenly came over the girl that he had no intention of speaking, no idea of declaring himself, of asking the momentous question she expected, and struck with the horror of it all she covered her face with her hands and burst into a passion of weeping.

"Rosie, Rosie," cried Elmer, putting out his arms, but she eluded him and, springing upon the veranda, she went into the house, closing the door softly in his very face.

O God! Was it possible that he thought of her so lightly? What had she done to deserve such treatment at his hands? She crept into her little bed, all her pleasure, all her joy and happiness gone, feeling that in spite of all her humiliation, in spite of her just anger and indignation, that she loved him with a passion past all hope of lasting regret. She resolved, however, very firmly resolved to break off all intimacy with him, unless—unless—oh she was weak, very weak in her womanly passion! She had no one to guide her, no one to look to, for she felt that she could not reveal

her secret anguish to friends, however near; she could not turn to her mother who hated her, and that mother had never taught her to look to God.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH ROSIE IS AGAIN MADE HAPPY.

Elmer had spent four years at college, during which, from all that can be learned, he distinguished himself neither for mental brilliance nor physical prowess. He was, indeed, bright of mind, but so careless and indolent that duller plodders outstripped him in the end. He took no part in the rough and tumble games in which your rugged, manly young man takes supreme delight, shrinking with a womanish fear from the rude usage accompanying such sports. Nevertheless, he was a general favorite. There was a certain indefinable charm about the young fellow, a winning grace, a careless gayety, that captivated those with whom he came in contact. He was an especial favorite with women. His love escapades came to be spoken of in whispers of awed admiration among his associates. With the reputation of being the sole son and heir of a multi-millionaire with plenty of money in his pocket, which he spent like a prince, with a handsome person and an engaging presence, he was hailed everywhere and welcomed with open delight wherever he chose to go. What wonder that, surrounded by constant adulation, fawned upon and flattered, his evil propensities pandered to, his peccadilloes winked at, with the reputation of a libertine by no means deserved, but which he came in the end to consider it his duty to live up to—what wonder, I say, that this young man, who was rather weak than evil, should return home an idle, good-for-nothing scamp with a heart dead to all ennobling emotions and a mind debased by false ideas of women, doubting their truth, their purity and chastity, and considering all men either libertines or hypocrites!

"To Mr. Elmer Marblemore:

"Do not call upon me any more. I do not wish it. Do not come to the store again to see me. I return your ring.

I am very sorry, but your conduct compels me to this step.

"ROSE ROSEWOOD."

Elmer read this little note late on the following day as he sat at breakfast. He was dining alone, but his mother and Clara were with him in the dining-room. Clara was sitting at a neighboring window with an easel in front of her, sketching the surrounding scenery and the cold, blue sky with its fleecy specks of clouds, bending above it; Mrs. Marblemore stood behind the girl, watching the growing picture.

"Very pretty, Clara," she said again and again.

Clara shrugged her strong shoulders with an air of disdain.

"Come and look, Elmer," said his mother.

"Presently, Mama," replied Elmer, still busied with his letter.

He read little Rosie's note half a dozen times, chuckling and sputtering with laughter. When he had finished, he went lounging about the room, as was his habit, now dropping languidly into a chair, now throwing his leg across a stand or table, then stretching himself at full length upon a sofa, or leaning indolently against the mantel or a convenient window, always nervous, restless, discontented.

"What time did you come home last night, Elmer?" asked his mother, smiling fondly at the boy.

If she loved him as passionately as of yore she did not show it so openly now. His long-continued absences had in a measure cured her of the constant yearning to give her love expression by eternal caressing. And then he was somehow different. He had grown away from her during those years. She felt it, but still her eyes followed him about faithfully, and his presence in a room with her filled for the moment the aching void in her heart.

"It was nearer morning than night, Mama," he replied, stretching himself at ease upon a lounge.

"Where did you go after the play?"

"Oh, I was around with some friends."

"Elmer, I'm afraid you are a very naughty boy."

"Yes, I'm a bad egg, Mama," he replied, bounding up and going across the room towards Clara. She showed herself very uneasy while he stood behind her. She compressed her lips tightly, wrinkled her brows, and twitched her shoulders in a way that evidently disgusted him, for he walked away impatiently, making a grimace behind her back. He took up his position at some distance from her, leaning against a window.

"How are you getting along with the club, Clara?" he asked.

"Very nicely," she replied, without looking up. "We've held two meetings now in our new hall, and we've got over thirty members."

There was little love lost between these two, but they had become more friendly of late. Clara's unexpected forbearance had shamed Elmer into decent behavior, and he had of late made some overtures towards a more amicable understanding. Clara had at first repulsed him, but upon Mrs. Marblemore's entreaties, the good-natured girl had received his friendly advances at least with toleration, but all advances came from him. No doubt Elmer had a purpose of his own in seeking Clara's friendship, for it would be absurd to suppose that the feeling of loathing which she had always inspired in him had vanished in a moment. As it was, Mrs. Marblemore had to watch them closely to guard against the results of the all too frequent outbreaks.

"Who's President of the club?" asked Elmer, carelessly.

"Why, Myrtle, to be sure. She organized it. I'm going to read a paper at the next meeting, Mama," she added.

"I suppose it is like the other," said Mrs. Marblemore, contemptuously. "You meet only to discuss the shortcomings of your friends and neighbors."

"No, no, Mama," said Clara, "our first rule is 'No Gossiping.'"

"How can such a rule be enforced among a lot of women?" said Elmer, with a sneer.

"Well, it is enforced," retorted Clara, hotly.

"Glad to hear it," said Elmer, dryly.

He came across the room and seated himself upon a small round table, with one foot resting upon the floor and the other dangling, but bounded up almost immediately, to throw himself upon a sofa.

"For goodness sake, Elmer," said his mother, "what makes you so restless?"

"I don't know," he replied, again rising to ring the bell. "I'm going down town."

"You shouldn't stay out so late nights, dear. You look quite pale, doesn't he, Clara?"

"I suppose so," said Clara, without looking up.

Nothing on earth could have angered Elmer more than this callous indifference to his personal appearance. He was about to burst into some angry words when his mother, placing her hand over his mouth, shook her head entreatingly.

Jacques, a young mulatto boy, Elmer's personal attendant, came in at the moment, bearing his master's coat and hat.

"Good-bye, Mama," he said, kissing her. Then he went across and again stationed himself behind Clara, his close proximity again producing those uneasy movements in the girl.

"That is very pretty, Clara," he said. "Good-bye!"

He remained standing behind her after she had answered him.

"I say, Mama," he suddenly exclaimed, "why can't you bring some of your friends here of an evening? You are always scolding me for staying out, you know."

"Surely we can, Clara," said Mrs. Marblemore, eagerly.

"You forget, Mama," said Clara, coldly, "that we cannot keep our friends here to entertain him all night, and that whatever the hour at which they take their leave he would still spend the remainder of the night in carousing."

Elmer flushed hotly and made a step forward, almost as if he would strike her, but his mother again interposed.

"Whom would you like, Elmer?" she said, coaxingly.

"Oh, I don't care," he replied, sulkily.

"The Rosewoods, perhaps," said Clara, disdainfully.

"By all means," said Mrs. Marblemore, quickly, forestalling Elmer's angry reply, "if he wishes it."

"But I do not wish it," said Elmer, scowling. "Why not ask Aunt Sadie and Myrtle and Mr. Watterson?"

"And Sherman," cried Clara, with sudden animation. "To be sure!"

"I suppose we'll have to include him," said Elmer, in a tone of extreme disgust.

Clara rose up, and standing before him let her eyes slowly wander over him from head to foot and back again.

"We shall most certainly include him," she said, emphatically.

"Hush, Clara! Please, Elmer! Good heavens, what unreasonable children!" cried poor Mrs. Marblemore. "If Elmer would rather have them come without Sherman, we will wait until some evening when he is away."

"But I tell you," cried Clara, facing her stepmother hotly, "I tell you I will not bear it. Unless Sherman comes the others shall not come."

"You seem to have a very decided predilection for Sherman's society," sneered Elmer.

"I have, sir."

"And you are not ashamed to own it?"

"No."

"Much good may he do you."

"He's worth a dozen of you," said Clara, and swept out of the room.

Mrs. Marblemore sank into a chair with a comical expression of dismay.

"Was ever a poor woman so beset?" she cried. "I never saw two such hot-headed, irreconcilable young people in all my life. Why should you care if she wants Sherman? You don't mean to marry her, do you?"

"Well, hardly."

"Then why should you object to Sherman?"

"I don't," cried Elmer, suddenly. "Good Lord, no! I haven't the least objection in the world! Heavens, what a blind fool I am. I'd give ten years of my life if she would marry him."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Marblemore, resignedly.

Elmer was in high good humor as he sauntered down the street towards town, waving a slender cane and smoking a cigarette. He presented an elegant appearance, his fine figure arrayed in faultless attire, his handsome face as smooth as a woman's, his languid blue eyes blinking lazily as he walked and smoked.

"My gracious! as dear old Aunt Sadie says," thus he soliloquized. "That is the very thing. Get him to marry Clara and the matter's settled. Who is there to outclass me with Myrtle with him out of the way? No one. Dear, pure, sweet Myrtle, I never thought when I came back to this hole that there was a woman in the world capable of inspiring such a feeling of reverence in me as she has. She's a saint, an angel, Aunt Sadie in miniature. Not beautiful —no—but—but—there's something about her that makes a fellow feel like hiding his head." He paused to laugh as another matter occurred to him.

"What a letter! The dear litttle innocent. God, but wasn't she pretty last night! No, no, my little darling, we're not done yet. And when we are I'll turn over a new leaf, that's flat."

He nodded a gay greeting to all, smiling as kindly in answer to the admiring nod of the laboring man in his rough working clothes as to the professional. He was not proud nor haughty, but a good-natured, easy-going young fellow and a general favorite. He turned into the office of the Clarenceburg Chronicle, in passing tapped Daniel familiarly on the head with his cane, and strode gayly into the editorial sanctum where Sherman and the General were sitting, each at his desk, but facing each other, chatting and smoking.

"Aha, General!" said Elmer, shaking hands, "you and the old boy are at daggers drawn yet, eh?"

"Ah, my young reprobate," said the General, cordially.

He dearly loved a wild, young blood, such as Elmer undoubtedly was. Sherman accorded Elmer a friendly smile, shaking hands warmly with the young fellow.

"I say, General, you must let up on the old boy," said Elmer. "Come down on me, why don't you?"

"You!" cried the General. "Not wo'th a line. Too insignificant a puppy."

Elmer laughed.

"Yo' want to give up yo' reckless co'ses, young man," said the General, sternly, "and settle down."

"I'm going to, General," said Elmer, "I've just been making resolutions coming along."

"Then begin, suh, by throwing that abominable thing away," said the General, pointing with an expression of extreme disgust at the cigarette. "Don't pollute the presence of gentlemen with such poisonous vapahs, suh. Throw it away."

"There, General," said Elmer, good-naturedly obeying the autocratic old man.

"Yo' haven't succeeded in drawing this boy away from Aunt Sadie's apron strings yet?" said the General, smiling.

"No," said Elmer, regarding Sherman with some curiosity. "He's a funny fellow. Why not come out with me some night, Sherman?"

"Thanks," replied Sherman, dryly, "I have some self-respect."

The General roared with laughter, pounding his knee with his fist as he did when greatly delighted. Elmer, after a moment of indecision, laughed too, but he clearly did not like Sherman's blunt scorn.

"You would be the better for a little dissipation," he said lightly, "but go your own way."

"I propose to," said Sherman, composedly.

The General still roared with laughter, beating his knee in accompaniment. He liked Elmer's grace and polish, but he liked Sherman's rough directness more. He admired Elmer as a dashing, dissipated lad, but he loved Sherman for his rugged purity, the more especially as he saw that it proceeded not from a shrinking, cowardly spirit, but from a manly devotion to an ideal wrought by the noble example of a pure woman and a good man.

"Elmer, you dog," said the General, "you'll come to a bad end unless you bring up sha'p."

Elmer waved his hand in friendly farewell, and went away muttering to himself.

"Eh, Johnson, old boy," he said, going into the bank. "How do, Ainsworth." He nodded to various of the young

and old men in the rear behind the grating, then went into the banker's private office. "Hello, Daddy," he said, genially, "working like a slave as usual, I see?"

"I've got to work, you idle scamp," said the banker, smiling broadly, "to keep you in pocket money."

"That's right, Daddy," said Elmer, approvingly. He sat down in a wide arm-chair, but got up immediately in his usual restless, nervous fashion, and went walking up and down the narrow room. "If there is anything I like to see in others, it is an unselfish devotion to duty, and, Daddy, you are a model of unselfishness. Do you know, Daddy," continued the droll rogue, throwing a leg across the desk and looking down at the banker with his winning smile. "Do you know that if I had had my choice of fathers I should have chosen you out of all the world? Give you my sacred word. You are the right sort, Daddy, and if it will afford you any gratification to hear it, let me tell you that I am satisfied with you and I herewith give you my blessing."

"Oh, you little rascal," roared the delighted banker, nearly suffocating with laughter, his great red face purpling as he lay back in his chair holding his sides. There was a titter, too, among the dozen young and old men in the rear. "Ainsworth! Johnson! Parker!" cried Mr. Marblemore, still laughing, "did you hear the dog? He's satisfied with me, and he gives me his blessing! Haw! Haw! Haw!"

The dozen young and old men in the rear doubled up with glee at what their employer manifestly considered a good joke.

"Let me tell you, young man," said the banker, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes, "that the question is not whether you are satisfied with me, but whether I am satisfied with you."

"Oh, is it?" said Elmer, thoughtfully, "come to think of it, Daddy, perhaps there is something in that."

"There certainly is, Elmer," said Mr. Marblemore in a graver tone. "When are you coming into the bank?"

"When you leave it, Daddy," said Elmer, gayly. "My methods of banking are directly opposed to yours. I believe in scattering the money; you believe in piling it up, so you see we would be clashing all the time. The first thing

I'll do when I take charge of this institution will be to give every one of the poor devils back there a thousand dollars and a month's vacation to spend it in."

No doubt the dozen young and old men in the rear approved this ingenious idea hugely, but Mr. Marblemore frowned.

"Come, come, Elmer, no fooling about business," he said.

"Honor bright, Daddy," said Elmer, negligently. "Now tell me, what's the use of your toiling away like a slave here when you've got so much?"

He had thrown himself into the wide arm-chair again and with his elbow resting on his knee, he leaned forward, regarding the banker thoughtfully. The question evidently puzzled that great man.

"What's the use?" he said, vaguely, "I've got to keep on, that's all."

"Wrong, Daddy," said Elmer, smiling, "you can cut it any day."

"Well, I like to work."

"Too thin, Daddy, really," said Elmer, laughing. "Is there really a man born of woman that likes to work? You don't like it, Daddy. You only imagine it. You've fallen into a rut and you don't know how to get out of it, that's all. Work, Daddy, is against nature."

"Elmer, I don't know half the time whether you are fooling or in earnest," said Mr. Marblemore.

Elmer came over to him and threw his arms across the banker's shoulder, hugging him.

"Upon my soul," he said in a low voice, "I could almost play the woman and kiss you."

He bent over him, and for the space of half a minute gazed into his stepfather's heavy featured red face, his cheeks flushing slightly, and his eyes moist and soft like an affectionate woman's. Indeed there was much that was womanish in this young man. He had the smooth face, the physical timidity and the winning grace and charm of the woman, and, added to them, the form and features, the physical strength and moral weakness of the man—a by no means uncommon combination.

"I am very much in earnest, Daddy," he said, throwing himself back into his chair, "when I say that I would like to have you give up business—at least for a while. Come with me, and Mama, and Clara to Europe. What do you say? Good Lord, you've grubbed long enough. Cut it all and come. We'll jaunt about for a couple of years and have a royal good time, scattering the coin that you have been piling up through all these years."

"It won't do, Elmer," said the banker, shaking his head. "I can't let go. I actually cannot do it. My investments, my son, are all ventures. They are colossal. I have interests in perhaps every State in the Union. I figure in every corporation of moment in the country. For twenty years I have been venturing, venturing, venturing, not only my own possessions but the fortunes of many men who trust me. I must stay and look after their interests and my own. My investments are all good, while I remain at the helm, but the moment I let go—pah! I couldn't think of such a thing!"

"But you need rest, Daddy. You'll kill yourself working."

"Nonsense," laughed the banker, "I'm as strong as a horse. I was brought up on a farm, my son, before the advent of labor-saving machinery. I worked eighteen hours a day beneath the burning sun, in ice and rain and sleet and snow, from the time I was eight until my twenty-fifth year; and such work! You who have been raised on honey, milk and kisses cannot realize it. Work! I'm used to it. I thrive on it. In fact, I don't know what I would do without it."

"You're a funny old boy, all right," said Elmer, ruminating. "Well, I don't mean to work as long as I can get out of it, Daddy."

"Go ahead, you scamp," said Mr. Marblemore, rubbing his big red hands together. "No doubt you'll tire of idleness after a while, and then you'll come to me fast enough. Now clear out. I'm head over heels in business, and here I've given you an hour of my time."

But Elmer gone, the banker at once recollected a matter of which he particularly wished to speak, and without

troubling Johnson, he plunged through the confidential man's little box and into the street, and in his heedless precipitation came into violent bodily contact with General Hamilton who, as usual absorbed in his newspaper, was passing at the moment, oblivious of all the world. The two men glared at each other for a moment in a kind of terrible silence.

"Well, suh!" said the General, in a savage tone.

He had dropped his paper to the walk, and with a movement of his arm, had thrown back the old-fashioned cloak he wore, and now stood clutching his cane, glaring beneath pent brows at the banker.

"I—," the latter's words came with exceeding slowness, "I—beg—your—pardon."

"Ah!" said the General, and walked on without another word or look. Daniel following, picked up the newspaper, and hastened after his master, grinning widely at the banker as he passed. Mr. Marblemore stood for a moment, his bald head gleaming in the sun, looking after the old warrior. His expression was decidedly unpleasant. Elmer, who had witnessed the encounter, came up laughing.

"Did you want to see me, Daddy?" he said looking drolly at the banker.

"Don't laugh, Elmer," said Mr. Marblemore, quietly. He led the way into the office again. "I wished to ask you something," he said, rubbing his hands together a little nervously. "I've noticed your attentions to little Rosie—Mrs. Rosewood's daughter. Now, I don't want to pry into your private affairs—but will you tell me, Elmer, what your intentions are with regard to this little girl?"

Elmer sat silent with an expression that in a woman would have been called pouting.

"I want you to understand distinctly, Elmer," the banker went on, "that any girl—any modest, virtuous girl whom you see fit to bring home as your wife will be most warmly welcomed by me and by your mother. I do not deny that I had other hopes, but I believe in permitting young people to follow their own inclinations. I am still old-fashioned enough to believe in love."

Still Elmer sat silent—pouting.

"You owe me some confidence, Elmer," said the banker, gently.

"Yes, Daddy, but you shouldn't think that a fellow is going to marry every girl he shows common courtesy to."

"Oh, that's it," cried the banker, smiling. "We used to call it 'keeping company' thirty years ago. I kept company with half a dozen girls before I found the right one. Go ahead, my boy. Have your fun and give the girls a good time; but don't let matters go too far. You must always consider the girl's feelings, Elmer. I believe that you are a very lovable scamp, and so do not make this little girl unhappy. Let her understand from the beginning that you have no serious intentions, that you are merely desirous of enjoying her society, and when the right man appears, you must stand aside. It is hardly necessary for me to say," he added, with a sudden tightening of the lips, "that I do not suspect you of designs on this young woman's virtue."

He regarded Elmer with large round eyes of inquiry, and smiled in answer to the boy's reassuring shake of the head.

"That would be too bad, Elmer, a good, pure little girl like Rosie. Now clear out, you rogue, and leave me to my work."

"What a queer old fellow he is," mused Elmer, as he walked into the street. "I believe that much as he loves me he'd turn me out neck and crop if he thought that. Nevertheless—"

He finished the sentence by walking into Murly's. He did not pause at any counter as he had done on the previous day, but went straight to Rosie. Rosie stood with a sad, wistful expression. She had been very sad and wistful all day, thinking of her hopeless but unquenchable love for Elmer, and of his passionate kisses of last evening. She could talk to no one. She could only think of her little romance forever ruined, and brood upon her sorrow.

Elmer made straight for Rosie's counter, and from the smiling glances of the girls around her, Rosie knew who was approaching. She became pale and faint, with a sickening sinking of the heart, and she leaned, weak and quaking, against the shelves behind, looking down.

"Rosie," said Elmer's soft, sweet voice. "Dear, sweet little Rosie, won't you look at me?"

She looked at him, blushing deeply, as she thought with shame how she had lain in his arms, how he had kissed her, and her eager submission to his caresses. The girls around looked on curiously, but kept their distance like good-hearted little creatures, thinking it a quarrel and a possible reconciliation.

"What have I done, Rosie," said Elmer, "that you should send me such a cruel letter?"

His voice sounded far, far away to the ears of the enchanted girl, but it was so soft and sweet and kind in its alluring pleading, that she bent her head as if to catch its slightest sound.

"Look at me, Rosie. Speak to me, dear little Rosie."

She looked at him obediently, but did not speak. His delicate pallor was greater than usual and his eyes looked moist in their brightness.

"Did you treat me right, Rosie?" he demanded. "I declare my love for you and give you a ring to seal our engagement, and without answering me, you run away and this morning send me such a cruel letter, and return the ring. Did you treat me right, Rosie?"

"You—said—nothing," gasped Rosie, in deep agitation.

"Did not I? Ah! you want words! You do not love me. You want words instead of kisses!"

"No, no, Elmer. No, no."

"Was not the ring proof enough? Was not my love proof enough? But you want words, empty words!"

"Elmer, you are killing me!"

She stood leaning against the shelves, her face so pale, so bloodless and agitated, that Elmer became alarmed. The transition from the deepest depths of despair to the utmost pinnacle of joy and happiness almost deprived the girl of her senses. Ah, he was noble and she was base! He was an angel of purity and she had doubted him!

"Forgive me, Elmer," she said brokenly.

"Engaged!" said Elmer. "Of course we are! That is what I meant. That is why I gave you the ring. And you returned it to me!"

"Elmer, you will break my heart," said Rosie, imploringly.

"I am coming tonight. May I, Rosie?"

"Yes, Elmer."

"And I am going to place this ring on your finger again. And I am going to kiss my own little girl as often as I wish."

Rosie blushed rosily.

"Am I not?"

"Yes, Elmer," she replied, in a very low voice. "Go now, Elmer; please, please go."

Her bosom was heaving, as with a violent storm. He raised his hat with his usual grace, and went away. Rosie followed him with devouring eyes, despite the derisive giggles rising around her, and when he was entirely gone from her sight, she hurried to the rear, and behind a pair of portieres she sank upon a cushioned settee and gave way to the overpowering emotions that almost burst her swollen heart. Oh, God! how happy she was! how happy! how happy!

She resumed her place behind the counter after a time, a radiant creature of beauty and happiness, and smilingly received the good-natured chaffing of her companions. She neither affirmed nor denied their repeated charges of a quarrel and reconciliation, but her altered appearance gave ample proof for the inference.

She went home at the usual hour, and after supper, arrayed in her prettiest finery, she quakingly awaited Elmer in the tiny parlor. He came, and was very kind and loving. He said not a word of marriage, but he placed the ring upon her third finger and made her avow her love a hundred times, declaring his own passion as often and more fervently. Rosie owned her love gladly, sweetly, humbly, passionately. He held her in his arms all the evening and kissed her as he had said he would, as often as he wished, and without protest from Rosie.

"May I tell Mama, Elmer?" asked Rosie.

"Not just yet, Rosie," said Elmer. "I must first see how things lay at home before our engagement is made known. Tell no one."

She acquiesced humbly, and after a very happy hour spent together he went away, compelling her at the last to place her arms around his neck and kiss his lips.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ORGANIZATION.

The history of the political organization of which Mr. Watterson was the head dated back fully twenty years. When, at the outbreak of the Civil War, young Watterson left college to accept a commission as lieutenant in an Illinois regiment of volunteers, he confidently expected to return and resume his studies at the end of two or three months. He did not return for nearly five years, most of which time he spent in the commissary department, where he rose to be brigade quartermaster with the rank of major. Only those who have filled similar posts in time of war can know the arduous duties of those four terrible years. He never spoke of them. He went into the army a serious young man of eighteen, he re-entered college a sober young man of twenty-three, and hung up his shingle in his native town at the age of twenty-seven, graver than ever.

It was in the beginning of the Grant-Seymour campaign, and the services of the young lawyer, who was an ardent Republican, were enlisted in behalf of that party. What was more natural than that he should throw himself heart and soul into his first political campaign? From earliest boyhood he had taken an absorbing interest in politics. Great politicians were his heroes; the lives of men eminent in statescraft his favorite study.

He had dreamed of some day taking an active part in affairs of political moment, and, given an opportunity, he worked with astonishing vigor and endurance. He made the first of his famous whirlwind tours of the State, speaking in every town and hamlet in it, and between journeys found time to found the Clarence County Republican Club, an organization whose members were pledged to vote and work for the Republican party; and so actively did he bestir himself as their leader that, by the end of the campaign, the Clarence County Republican Club had blossomed

into the Illinois State Republican Club, with branches in five counties and a membership running into the thousands.

With victory came the reward, in the form of political patronage, both State and Federal. Then it was that the young man proved himself a born leader. He wanted nothing at all for himself, but much, very much, for his friends and associates. He was not at all modest in his demands, and he was given pretty much all he asked for, and all that was given was distributed by him among the most powerful and deserving of his confederates. He thus by his aggressive liberality, no less than by his modest renunciation of all personal profit, won their confidence and support for the future. He was urged to keep alive the organization which he had founded, and which had done such splendid work for the party, and with the assistance of large slices of political pie he managed to do this so well that by the opening of the Grant-Greeley campaign it was firmly lodged in a dozen counties, and by the end of that memorable campaign it had spread over double the number, and was to be reckoned with as a power in the State. And Winfield S. Watterson was still its leader. Again, he showed excellent executive ability in the matter of patronage, demanding much and giving it out with a liberal though a discriminating hand, and a princely contempt for personal interest that won the admiring regard of all.

His organization now was firmly established, he was hailed as the party leader in the State. His power was great and constantly growing. Measures were indeed taken to curb him. He was fiercely assailed by the press all over the State and bitterly fought, not only by the opposing party, but by many leading members of his own, but to no avail. Once started, his onward march like a torrent was resistless, overwhelming, stopping for nothing and at nothing, setting the press at defiance; engulfing local leaders and their puny machines or ruthlessly crushing them, until presently his organization covered the entire State.

He ruled all conventions, controlled all patronage, and he who would go to State or Federal capital as the people's representative must perforce become a member of the

organization; and those who at first had most bitterly assailed Watterson found it necessary for very self-preservation's sake to join hands with him. Congressmen, Judges, Senators—the very Governor of the State—owed his political being to the organization. And Winfield Scott Watterson at its head was the best-hated and most-feared man in the State. He was the organization. His power remained for a long time undisputed.

The succeeding eight or ten years he spent in firmly establishing the organization wherever it had found a foothold. And this was now a very easy matter. The uninterrupted reign of the Republican party in State and Nation continued an uninterrupted flow of patronage, and the organization, controlling it all, waxed exceedingly strong and powerful. After fifteen years of building there followed half a dozen years of solid intrenching, and Boss Watterson bent every energy to make the organization unassailable from without; but when he had well-nigh accomplished the task, lo! there arose tremendous dissensions within. During the first years of his leadership Watterson's modest retirement and renunciation of all personal advantage, his manifest zeal in behalf of his followers had disarmed all envy, and the absence of individual jealousy had prevented any concerted revolt against him, and later, when his position waxed stronger and his power was more fully recognized, such malcontents as might have disputed his leadership in earlier days dared not defy him, for a miscarrying of plans meant utter annihilation. But when the organization had expanded to its utmost limits and its members were in position to enjoy the fruits of their labor; when in short, they had become exceedingly fat and greasy with prosperity, many became restive, and some few of the more venturesome revolted, notably Southgate of Peoria.

Southgate had been one of the organization's strongest leaders, and had, with Dillingham, done wonders in organizing its forces in the North, but his demands grew with his increasing strength, until in his insolence he even threatened Watterson's pre-eminence. He was a bitter little man, was Southgate, personally of little worth, according to Mr. Watterson's reckoning, but with many brainy and unscrupu-

lous men behind him, who, disgusted with the incorruptible honesty of Boss Watterson, would willingly have deposed him in favor of a less scrupulous and more pliable man. Now Mr. Watterson's policy had always been one of conciliation. Was there any opposition offered him in any quarter by a man worthy of notice, then terms were immediately offered and a compromise effected, if possible, and not until every possible effort to bring about a reconciliation had proved in vain, did the great man reluctantly put forth his strength to crush the upstart. Such contests could have but one ending: the rebel was effectually silenced, and Watterson continued on his way imperturbable and omnipotent—until Southgate's revolt. The little man from Peoria would accept no terms, nor would he be crushed. Urged on by those around him he defied his old time friend and ally to his worst, and in the end he broke away from the organization which had made him, and set out vigorously to fight it.

And fight it he did, with such vigor and determination that four years before the organization had met with the first defeat in its history. The State went into the hands of the Democrats, and with it all the patronage of the State and Nation. Those were trying days to Mr. Watterson, not because of Southgate, who merely irritated but did not worry him. He believed firmly in that dictum which declares that "to the victors belong the spoils," the spoils being the offices, the patronage, and it grieved him to have so little to give to his faithful friends and allies, who, coming from all parts of the State, besieged him, a clamorous horde.

And now the time of battle was again approaching. Four years had passed away. Years of tranquility to Watterson, but of great activity, too. The organization continued intact, and save for the rebellious forces in the northern part of the State controlled by Southgate, it presented a united front to the enemy. That Southgate would be conciliated or effectually silenced before the struggle set in in earnest was the general belief, for notwithstanding the Peoria man's exceeding activity, his public rantings and posings, it was not believed that he would be permitted to wreck the party's chances again. He had had his fling and

had failed to draw to himself that element which gives supremacy to leadership. True, he had won over various big leaders. Sommerville of Galesburg had been won by glittering promises; Forsythe and Wilmarth, too, had ranged themselves by his side and against Watterson, and various minor men had gone over to the enemy. With many Watterson's rule had been irksome in the extreme. He was far too honest, men said, for a politician, and indeed his integrity of character was a stumbling block in the way of many of his most loyal followers. He believed firmly in the honesty of the organization as a whole. Was it not composed of the actual voters of the State, men who like himself believed firmly in the principles of the Republican party; men of ideals and of incorruptible rectitude? That a rascal would now and then creep into a position of public trust was to be expected, but such were weeded out as they revealed themselves. Many a promising young man of weak moral fibre was given his political quietus by a word from the Boss, and ever after debarred from public preferment—which would in a measure account for Southgate's strength, for all these as a matter of course flocked to his standard in the hope of getting something for services which were coldly declined by the dominant power. They received promises, and in default of anything better they contented themselves with these.

Southgate now held three districts absolutely against the regular organization and several others were said to be in doubt. All sorts of rumors were afloat. Dillingham was said to have been approached by the Peoria man's emissaries and, although nothing tangible had come of it, there were those who predicted his ultimate surrender. Every day reports came in of wavering leaders; the newspapers were full of rumors and counter rumors to the effect that a scheme was hatching by which Dillingham would join forces with the renegade for the purpose of wresting the leadership of the regular organization from Watterson—this in the face of Dillingham's repeated visits to Clarenceburg and his open friendship for Watterson. Such a coalition was possible of course, and if effected it would inevitably mean Watterson's downfall, but no one really believed it probable

in spite of newspaper report. Watterson had been killed off before many times, but always he had come out of the confusion with his hand at the helm and those who had arrayed themselves against him were never heard of more. And such, declared the knowing ones, would ultimately be Southgate's fate.

Southgate in the meantime had gained great newspaper notoriety. He rushed into print upon the slightest provocation and in strident tones proclaimed himself as the champion of the people. He posed as a little St. George and the Dragon, and indeed was pictured thus charging down upon a monster whose face was the face of Watterson. The big man, however, continued quietly on his way paying little heed to the Peoria man's mouthings. He was a silent man; he rarely talked for publication. Newspaper censure did not ruffle him a jot. The Democratic press of the State was, of course, united against him, while the Republican organs were divided in their allegiance, especially in the large centres. In the country districts he was exceedingly popular. The farmers idolized him, and every country newspaper of Republican affiliations stood loyally by him.

It was an off year in politics and things in consequence were rather quiet. Nevertheless, the waiting rooms outside Mr. Watterson's law offices usually were crowded with visitors. Politicians, large and small, each with his peculiar following, came from all parts of the State to report conditions in their various districts; newspaper men in search of political news flocked hither in varying numbers; leaders of note who called to consult with the Boss; farmers from the country around; curious sightseers; women with missions; office-seekers and cranks of every kind and caliber. A motley throng they shifted about in constantly changing groups, smoking big cigars, and spitting profusely, or surged through the wide corridor outside and down the broad staircase overflowing into the square where they gathered in knots to discuss the latest developments. The occasional appearance of a leader of note was the signal for a general rush, which ended as a rule in nothing, for the really big men were promptly admitted into the inner sanctum from whence all others were barred by the ever vigilant

secretary. Delaware was a man in a million. No person of doubtful aspect, no reporter, no crank with a mission, no idlers succeeded in getting past him.

"Anything doing, Delaware?" asked Farraday, a natty journalist, who succeeded where others failed in invading the secretary's little office.

"Nothing, Farraday," replied Delaware, surrendering a reluctant hand to the other's greeting.

He liked the man well enough, but newspaper men were his peculiar abhorrence, and Farraday, his favorite among a score who daily harrassed him, was the shrewdest by far of the lot. A pale, slightly built young fellow, special correspondent of the Chicago *Courier,* a glaringly yellow newspaper, it is probable that the favoritism shown him by the secretary in admitting him to the outer sanctuary arose as much from fear as from liking. Farraday had a way of nosing out news, which to say the least was disconcerting, and Delaware, who loved his Chief, rather went out of his way to conciliate this young man whose merry smile and innocent glasses were oddly at variance with the reputation he had acquired as a man whose journalistic effusions had made and unmade men of high political aspirations.

"Dillingham's down, I know," said Farraday, nodding, "and Brockington and Applegate."

"Only an informal meeting, Farraday, I assure you."

"Many important matters come up for discussion at these informal meetings, Delaware," hinted the journalist. "I'd like to be placed where I could overhear what is going on in there," he added, persuasively.

"Impossible, Farraday," replied the secretary, firmly; and Farraday, knowing the value of the man's continued confidence did not press him.

He probably would have learned little of real importance had he been permitted to overhear the conversation within the inner office. There were half a dozen leaders there to be sure, but there usually were half a dozen leaders with Mr. Watterson. Dillingham was of the number, Jovial Dick, red of face, fat and gorgeously attired, who had come down from Chicago on business of his own. Applegate, too, was there, Dillingham's genial friend and fellow

worker, and Brockington of Jacksonville, and one or two others, all prosperous looking men, sleek, well fed, as only politicians are. They were gathered around a table, comfortably seated in heavy leather-lined chairs, with feet cocked high and hats tilted at precarious angles, smoking fat cigars, and talking noisily. Mr. Watterson was walking up and down with measured tread, his head bent in thought. Over in one corner stood a great desk all littered with papers. A couple of windows facing the square were open top and bottom.

"He's all in, I tell you," Dillingham was saying vehemently. "He sent Burnett to me only a couple of weeks ago, and what do you think his proposition was?"

"Offered you the Senatorship?" suggested Brockington, jocosely.

"Naw! *He* wants that. 'All I want for myself,' he says, 'is Senator Ninghtingale's seat; that's all!' Oh, he's mighty reasonable," observed Dick, going off into a shout of laughter, in which the others joined more or less heartily. "Say, Scott," continued Dick, winking slyly at his merry companions, "how'd you like to see little Eddie Southgate in the United States Senate, representin' old Illinois?"

"Bah! what folly!" Mr. Watterson turned away in manifest irritation.

"Well, that's what he's aimin' at all right."

"But what was his proposition to you, Dick?" asked Brockington.

"He offered to make me Governor," replied Dillingham, grinning.

This announcement was received with a roar of laughter, which rather sobered Jovial Dick.

"What's the matter with you fellers?" he demanded, with only half a grin. "Don't you think I'd fill the bill, eh?"

"Sure you would, Dick," replied Brockington, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes.

"I only wish we had you up at Springfield now," said Osborne.

"He was jollying you, Dick," declared Applegate.

"Not on your life, he wasn't. He meant every word of it. He's on his last legs I tell you."

"But where does Burnett come in on this deal? And Summerville and the rest?"

"Oh, Burnett 'ud be nominated Lieutenant-Governor. He had everything cut and dried. I was to be Governor; Southgate himself was to go to the Senate; Burnett was to slip in with me; Summerville was to oust Martindale and so on down the line. Brockington there was to be eliminated entirely—that was the word—eliminated!"

Brockington scowled while Dillingham chuckled maliciously.

"How about me?" demanded Applegate.

"Oh, you were to be my secretary or something," roared Dillingham, pounding with his fist upon the table. "I forget just what Osborne was to get, but something at the tail end. Anyway, all the old leaders were to be eliminated—that was his word for cutting your throats—and new men put in. Oh, he had things fixed up fine."

"And what was your answer?" asked Brockington.

"Oh, I told him I'd think it over," replied Dillingham, with a broad grin. "No hurry, you know."

And again he went off into a shout of laughter at sight of the blank faces around him.

"What do you think of that, Scott?" asked Brockington, turning to Mr. Watterson, who still was pacing to and fro with measured tread. "Dick, here, is hobnobbing with Southgate, beneath our very noses."

Mr. Watterson glanced affectionately at Dick, who was lolling back in his chair, watching his Chief through half-closed lids.

"Don't worry about Dick, Ben," he said quietly.

Dillingham's feet came to the floor with a crash and he half started from his chair, but sank back again with a laugh.

"Scott, you're a wonder," he said roughly, and thereafter became morosely silent while the others discussed with considerable animation the Peoria man's insidious practices.

"Boys," said Mr. Watterson, coming suddenly to a halt beside the table, "Dick is right when he says that Southgate has about reached the end of his resources. He looks strong, but he is undermined by his own associates. He

is surrounded by traitors without knowing it. I may tell you now that within the past month or so, I have received proposals from both Summerville and Forsythe, offering to betray their leader into my hands, and all they asked in return was recognition on the part of the regular organization."

This bit of news created a good deal of excitement. Brockington, Osborne and Applegate discussed it in animated undertones. Dillingham smoked in sombre silence.

"And what answer did you make, Scott?" asked Osborne.

"None."

"I knowed it!" cried Dillingham, bringing his fist down hard. "I'd ha' sworn he wouldn't."

"None!" cried Osborne, aghast.

"Why not?" asked Brockington.

"I do not treat with traitors," replied the big man, curtly.

"Hear him!" cried Dick, starting up suddenly and gazing across at the Chief in a kind of despair. "Here's the man whose been fightin' us for years. He's the cause of us losin' the State last election, and he's doin' his damnedest right now to ruin our chances next campaign, and along come the men behind him and offer to hand the dog over to us bound hand and foot, and here—he—Scott refuses to deal with 'em because they're traitors—because, mind you, they're doin' the very thing that'll give us a fightin' chance next year! Oh, I call it hell, that's what. Scott ought to be teachin' a kindergarten somewhere instead of bein' in politics."

"I am sorry, Dick," Mr. Watterson replied mildly; "but I cannot look at it your way. I say nothing against these men for going over to Southgate in the first place. They had a perfect right to do so, but for them to turn upon him now in this traitorous fashion—bah! I'll have nothing to do with them."

"But it's Southgate, man!" cried Dick. "Southgate whose been fightin' us these six years—our bitterest enemy—who lost us the State!"

"It makes no difference," replied Mr. Watterson.

"Treachery is treachery, though the betrayed be the blackest of traitors himself, and our enemy. I will not countenance it. Southgate really is harmless. It is these very men who have been using him as a catspaw to do their dirty work. You know that, Dick. Long before Summerville broke openly with the organization, he was working secretly with Southgate."

"These men may be necessary to us, Scott," interposed Brockington.

"Nonsense. All we need is to put up a strong ticket and we'll win in a walk. A strong man like John Sagamore as candidate will make victory a certainty."

"Sagamore," snarled Dillingham. "Never! We'll never consent to Sagamore."

"Not Sagamore, Scott," cried Brockington.

"Anybody but Sagamore," echoed Applegate.

Osborne, too, shook his head very decidedly.

"Well, well," said Mr. Watterson, good-humoredly. "Think it over. No hurry, you know. Plenty of time before the Convention. Who knows but that we'll have to adopt Southgate's idea and nominate our friend Dick after all."

Delaware came in at this moment with a pile of letters.

"Now clear out, boys," continued the big man, rubbing his hands together briskly. "I've got work to do."

"Anybody to see me, Delaware?" asked Dick, rising and stretching himself with a mighty yawn.

"Yes, several."

So Jovial Dick went briskly away, followed by the others. Almost with their disappearance came Sherman and with him Farraday, who smiled to see Mr. Delaware's discomfiture.

"Don't blame Delaware, Uncle," cried Sherman, laughing. "I stole past the boy with Farraday in tow, while Delaware's back was turned. We fellow-journalists have to stand by each other, you know."

"I don't see, Farraday, why you should persistently put yourself to this trouble," Mr. Watterson said, with a frown. "You know how useless it is."

"Trouble, sir, is my long suit," remarked Farraday, briskly. "I merely wanted to ask you about a rumor which

has got about that Dillingham and Southgate have got together on some sort of coalescing proposition which has your approval. How about it, Mr. Watterson? Any truth in this report?"

"I have nothing to say."

"Oh, come, Mr. Watterson, the merest hint will do. Now, I met Dick a moment ago. He was with you quite two hours, which means that your relations are as cordial as ever? That being the case, either that meeting with Southgate never took place or it was held with your knowledge and approval?"

"Your speculations, Mr. Farraday, are most interesting," observed Mr. Watterson, half smiling. "But if you will excuse me, I am very busy. You know that if I had anything to say I would send for you and the others."

"There, Farraday, I told you it was of no use," cried Sherman. "Let us be off."

"Did you wish to see me, Sherman?" asked Mr. Watterson, while Farraday stood biting his nails.

"Not particularly, Uncle, I merely wanted to get Farraday's opinion of some articles of mine and I came up on the chance of finding him here."

"Oh, I see. Your humorous description of Mrs. Hammersmith's reception, eh? And what does Farraday think?"

"Not my style," rejoined the natty journalist, brusquely. "Language too stilted; allusions out of date. Metaphors antiquated."

"But this is purposely cast in the Homeric strain."

"Maybe so. I've heard of this Homer fellow, of course, but I never just happened to come across any of his stuff and so can't say. But it doesn't matter. That sort of thing won't do at all these days. If Sherman is trying to fit himself for a career in metropolitan journalism he'd better drop it. Cut out metaphors; leave humor to the weeklies. Make your sentences short and crisp—snappy, you know. Write to the point. Make every word count. Be terse, be accurate, be concise—be anything but diffuse. Diffuseness is the unpardonable sin of modern journalism."

Sherman laughed good-naturedly.

"He chops his sentences up until you'd think they had all been put through a mill."

"It makes good reading, though," observed Mr. Watterson. "I never miss anything of Farraday's."

Farraday flushed up at this.

"If it only were not so hopelessly wide of the mark," added the big man, broadly smiling.

"What can you expect," cried Farraday, throwing out his hands, "when the man who of all men is best able to nail what is false refuses to speak?"

"There, Uncle!" cried Sherman, laughing.

"I guess you are right, Farraday. Well, you may deny the report which you say is being circulated to the effect that the organization is treating either directly or indirectly with Southgate, or with any of Southgate's associates."

"Ah, thanks! Then Dillingham hasn't been in conference with Southgate's emissaries?"

"Possibly he has. But the conference was not sought by Dillingham, and it led to nothing."

"Then Southgate is weakening!" cried Farraday.

"You may draw your own conclusions," said Mr. Watterson, turning to his letters.

"And your relations with Dick are cordial?"

"Of course; certainly. Dick and I are the best of friends. Now, Sherman, if you will clear out, I really must get to work."

"But about your probable candidate for Governor, Mr. Watterson," cried Farraday, hastily. "Will it be Sagamore?"

"Man, man, the Convention is still a year away. It is too early to say anything."

"But just a hint as to your favorite," urged Farraday. "The merest hint—"

But Sherman had him by the arm now and was half leading, half dragging him to the door, through which they disappeared, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Delaware, who regarded such unwarranted intrusion upon the privacy of his idolized Chief as a species of sacrilege for which mere man-made laws reserved no adequate punishment.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCATTERING THREADS.

General Hamilton was in a towering rage. He sat, half rising from his chair, glaring across at the wretched Ferguson.

"I can't help it, General," Ferguson was saying, appealingly. "Honest, I can't."

"Who the devil asked you to help it, suh?" roared the General. "Did I ever ask you to advertise in the Chronicle? Answa', suh!"

"No, no, can't a feller—"

"Well, what are you snivelling about then? Withdraw, suh, I daresay the Chronicle will manage."

"It's not that, General," said Ferguson, helplessly. "The advertisement is increasing my business and helping my trade among the farmers away out, and I know by withdrawing I'll be losing money."

"Then why withdraw it?"

"I can't tell you, General. Honest, I can't. All I can say is, that I'll be ruined if I don't."

"How?"

"I can't tell you."

"Get out of here instantly!" cried the General, bounding up in a fury. "What do you mean, suh, by coming to me and whining about yo' business? What in the devil's name have I to do with yo' business?"

"But General—"

"Don't but General me, suh," said the General assuming his bullying attitude, by bending forward with his hand on his hip and his angry face within six inches of the pale countenance of the terrified little grocer. "You decla' that yo' advertisement is increasing yo' business and yet you wish to withdraw it to save yo'self from ruin? What am I to make of that, suh? Are you trifling with me, suh? With *me*, General David C. Hamilton of Vu'ginia? Speah, suh, and speak quickly."

"Hold on, General," cried Ferguson, shrinking back as the angry old man's nervous hand advanced towards his collar. "Good Lord, wait. In my business a feller has to borrow money sometimes; it's all credit, and a feller is liable to become involved, and when a feller becomes involved and is unable to meet his obligations at times, and is given to understand by the parties that he's involved to that unless he does so and so they will come down on him—why, what's a feller to do? Me bein' helpless, bound hand and foot?"

"Do? Shoot the pa'ties, suh! Riddle 'em!"

"But, General—"

"Don't but General me!" thundered the irate old warrior. "I won't have it. Am I to unda'stand, suh, that you have become involved to Ma'blemo' and that Ma'blemo' info'med you that unless you withdrew yo' stuff from my paper—mine!—he would ruin you? Am I to unda'stand that, suh?" demanded the General, glaring down at the wretched Ferguson in unspeakable fury. "Ansua'" me suh. Am I to unda'stand that? By God! I'll cane the dog! I'll shoot the scoundrel! Wha'h's my cane? Sherman! Daniel! Wha'h in the devil's name are you? My cane, Daniel! My gun!"

Sherman came running in from the press-room to find the General striding up and down like a caged lion, absolutely foaming at the mouth.

"What is it, General?" cried Sherman, approaching him and laying his strong hands on the old man's shoulders. "Please compose yourself, General. The doctor—apoplexy!"

The General struggled to free himself from the boy's grasp, but he, familiar with the fiery old warrior's outbreaks and dreading the oft-predicted result if allowed to continue, held him firmly but with the utmost gentleness, and succeeded, after much persuasion, in pressing him limp and exhausted into his chair.

"What in thunder have you been telling him?" demanded Sherman, facing Ferguson angrily. "Why didn't you come to me if you had any unpleasant business?"

"But I had no idea he'd take it like this," said Fergu-

son, aghast. "I only wanted to withdraw my advertisement."

The General motioned Sherman to stand aside, and after two or three ineffectual attempts to speak he managed to stammer out, "Tell me about it."

"But there's nothing to tell," said poor Ferguson.

It looked for a moment as if the General would break out afresh. He swelled up visibly, turning purple, but his strength was spent.

"Now, General, don't get into a passion again," said Sherman, patting him affectionately on the knee. "You know what the doctor says."

"Damn the doctoh, suh!" the General gasped out.

"All right; damn him, by all means," said Sherman smiling; "only do it coolly. Tell me about it, Ferguson."

"Did you say that Ma'blemo'—?" interrupted the General.

"I didn't say a single solitary thing about Marblemore," cried Ferguson indignantly; "not a single solitary thing. I didn't mention his name once. Can't a feller be involved without a feller being involved to Marblemore?"

"Of whom did you borrow money, suh?"

"Of Marblemore. But wait, General; don't go off and come at a feller that way! My notes are all in Gorman's hands—Gorman's and Armstrong's. Marblemore ain't got nothing to do with it."

"They are Ma'blemo's lawyers, suh?"

"They are not; Watterson, Bloomfield and Harrington are Marblemore's lawyers. You ought to know that, General. Didn't they engineer the new reservoir scheme through—at least Bloomfield did. You'd know that if you'd stop to think a bit, instead of going off and coming at a feller that way. Gorman and Armstrong got hold of my notes in the way of business."

"Bankers don't sell or trade good papah, and yo's is good."

"It is," said Ferguson with pride. "But they got hold of it some way."

"Then by God!" cried the General starting up, "I'll make 'em tell me how it came into tha'h hands!"

"Now, General, don't be overhasty," said Sherman. "Give me a chance to learn something more about it."

"Why—why—why these scoundrels info'med Fe'guson that unless he'd instantly withdraw his advertisement from the Chronicle they'd ruin him."

"They did nothing of the kind," cried Ferguson, thoroughly exasperated. "Good Lord! Can't a feller make a statement without having different words put in a feller's mouth?"

"What did you say, Ferguson?" said Sherman laughing at Ferguson's indignation and the General's air of stupefaction as they stood regarding each other. "Come, tell me."

"I had become involved to a considerable extent, and this Gorman comes to me and tells me that he and his partner had become possessed of my notes. They were due, but I could have all the time I wanted if I'd agree to advertise exclusively in the Globe, in which they were financially interested. There wasn't nothing said about the Chronicle, and nothing about Marblemore, neither. I can't meet the notes because times are hard and money's tight. I can't collect my outstanding accounts, and so I agreed. And then I came to tell the General about it, and he goes off and comes at a feller like a wild man."

The General and Sherman exchanged glances of intelligence.

"That's all right, Ferguson," said Sherman. "You are at liberty to withdraw at any time. The General's anger was not directed at you, but at the men who are at the bottom of this thing."

"No hard feelings, General," said Ferguson in a conciliatory tone as he took up his hat.

"Get to the devil out of here," growled the General, "or I'll pu'fo'ate you."

Ferguson with an ingratiating smile backed hastily out of the room.

"Well, it's pretty much as I told you, boy," said the General. "All this advertising matta' that is leaving us is the result of Ma'blemo's unda'handed work. He intimidates Fe'guson, coerces Mu'ly, invests in Hennery's, gets

complete possession of Dougherty's mills, interests Mapleson in his own ventchas and so gets hold of him, and so on He's taken a dozen heavy advertisers away from us by one means or anotha in the last five or six months. Oh, I'll have to riddle that fellow yet. I can see that. I'll have to do it!"

"Don't talk nonsense, General. The day of shooting is past."

"Then I'll revive it, suh."

"No, you won't, General," said the boy coolly.

"You are an impudent young puppy, suh," replied the General, scowling.

He was still breathing hard from his recent outbreak.

"This infu'nal tempah of mine will be the death of me yet," he said, with a groan. "Look at that!" He held up a late issue of the Chronicle, pointing out the wide borders of the sheet which in former times had been one solid mass of advertisements, but which now were filled with printed matter, sketches and the like, clipped bodily from exchanges. "Do you see that? Advertisements all gone; subscriptions going. He wo'ks his vengeance swiftly and surely. I admire the man with it all. It shows why he made millions of dollahs in twenty years, sta'ting with nothing but his bare hands and his brains. That's it. The man's got brains. Only his brains are devoted to money-making. He's a human tumble-bug. That's what makes the man so vulgah. Whenever you see a brainy man devote himself wholly to money-making, depend upon it he's vulgah. He'd rob yo' hen-roost under different su'cumstances, suh; he'd beat his wife; he'd associate with nigras, suh."

"But still and all, General," mused Sherman, "we have no positive proof that this is Marblemore's doing."

The General gave him a glance of pity.

"Sherman," he said gravely, "if I didn't love you, I'd kick you into the street."

"Perhaps the paper is losing its old prestige."

"It is, it is," replied General Hamilton sadly. "I don't know what the wo'ld is coming to. Time was when I dictated to the entire county. No man ever was nominated on the Democratic ticket—aye, or on the Republican—without

my consent or tolu'ance. But now! Yes, the Chronicle is dying; its editoh is in the sere and yellow leaf."

He sat for a while in deep despondency. Sherman remained silent regarding his old friend compassionately. He had long ago observed the paper's decline and had eagerly hoped to stay its fall by his own efforts, had fondly fancied that his effusions would renew the blood in the fast-decaying journal. But no. His work did not appeal to the remnant of the class of which the General was the idol and prophet.

The General was an iconoclast, an irreconcilable, illogical, unreasoning thunderer, and the rising generation cared nothing for that sort of thing. Old-timers were dying off, and the old warrior's powers were failing him slowly but surely.

And to this was added the enmity of the all-powerful banker. Mr. Marblemore had in one way or another attached to him every business man of importance in Clarenceburg. He was an open-handed, generous man, always willing to assist a neighbor in difficulties, and in this way he had through the years won the gratitude of many. More were financially interested in his multifarious schemes and others were bound to him in a business way—were in his power, so to speak. Such a man would experience little difficulty in gaining unlimited support in any scheme in which he saw fit to engage, whether for the making or the ruining of a given man.

So it was, that at his nod, one merchant after another withdrew his patronage from the old Chronicle, assigning dull times, poor business and a necessary curtailment of expenses as causes for withdrawal. Not alone in the loss of advertisements did the Chronicle suffer; its circulation fell off alarmingly. An almost defunct newspaper, the Globe, suddenly took on new life, and by means of a lessening of rates, and the addition of many new and attractive features, took from its old and antiquated rival many readers and subscribers. That all this was due to the machinations of the mighty banker the General did not doubt, although nothing ever appeared on the surface to warrant such an assumption.

"General," said Sherman, "better let up on Marblemore."

"What, suh!" roared the old warrior, bristling with rage. "Do you dare insult me!"

"By no means, General, but you know I've always been in favor of the street railway. It's bound to come. The people want it; they're bound to have it some day. Our stand has hurt us a good deal."

"Bah, nonsense, suh!"

"Oh, all right. But I say you're wrong."

Notwithstanding their frequent disputes arising out of differences of opinion, General Hamilton had come to rely greatly upon Sherman. He gave the boy more and more latitude as he grew in power and poise, and though he found it necessary to exercise a mild supervision always, for Sherman was chock-full of mad whims and fancies, he never in the smallest degree sought to curb him in freedom of expression, having a theory born of long experience that such curbing would ruin all that was promising in the lad. He even permitted his pupil to express opinions on politics diametrically opposed to his own. The General was a democrat in theory only; at heart he was an aristocrat, pure and simple. Sherman was democratic to the core, and fond of expressing in print his theories on life and society. He was not given to the General's luridness of language; however extravagant the thought, it was ever clothed in mild and agreeable phrases, which he labored to make as elegant and as polished as possible.

About this time his crusade against the fashionable follies of a certain local coterie was in full swing. For long he had endured in silence the absurd social doings going on around about him. It was rather funny at first, and Sherman enjoyed the spectacle equally with the General and laughed in hearty sympathy with the unholy glee with which the old warrior watched the awkward antics of these ambitious ladies. But to laughter succeeded contempt and strong disgust. It was really too ridiculous, the sight of a fat and blowsey dame whose proper sphere was the kitchen, simpering her way through a "Reception" or a "Soiree," and Sherman set himself seriously to grapple with this evil,

which was so utterly at variance with the real, underlying simplicity of the life and of the spirit that pervaded it. The columns of the Chronicle furnished him the necessary medium through which to launch his shafts of ridicule and satire. The General, who had long since exhausted himself in thundering tirades without working the least good, gave his youthful associate the fullest license, and so from week to week, in a column especially devoted to the purpose, the elite of Clarenceburg were held up to public ridicule. The leaders of the craze, under various thinly disguised names, were humorously castigated, their pretensions derided, their affairs ridiculed without mercy and without end. Under pretense of describing the social functions of the week, our intrepid young editor reveled in humorous little digs and satirical flings directed at the more prominent devotees of fashion. The Hammersmiths, the Thompsons, the Millers and the Markhams, all came in for a share of his attention. There was nothing very savage in these attacks, nothing nearly so ferocious as General Hamilton's furious onslaughts, but the thing hurt. The gentle raillery, ofttimes disguised beneath a grave assumption of solemn interest, wounded grievously. Aunt Sadie held up her hands in horrified expostulation at the laceration of her friends, though she could not help laughing over her darling boy's fun. Mr. Watterson rumbled with laughter at various little descriptive touches; the General, highly elated over his youthful protege's success, encouraged him to renewed endeavors. The thing attracted wide-spread attention. The good folk of Clarenceburg at first smiled, then laughed, then became ashamed and angry.

The men were, of course, the first to awaken to the real meaning of these social performances which for so long had yielded only amusement to the citizens at large. Busied with his own more important affairs, always indulgent and carelessly tolerant, the husband asked only for peace and quiet. Given his slippers and old worn coat, his pipe and newspaper he bothered his head little about the doings of his women-folk. He was making money hand over fist and with his natural love of the luxuries of life he willingly yielded his consent to all kinds of costly improvements in his sur-

roundings, and good-humoredly subscribed to the increased cost of maintenance the new standard of living entailed; and so step by step imperceptibly the thing had grown.

The mania for building inaugurated by the erection of the gorgeous Marblemore mansion did strike rather hard, but after some grumbling and growling, Paterfamilias followed the fashion in this as in lesser things, and long rows of beautiful houses sprang up as a result, each more gorgeous and fantastic than its neighbor. Then as a natural sequence had come the servants and the other tomfoolery, matters all well enough in a community whose society has long been formed and polished, but ridiculously out of place in rude, crude Clarenceburg.

When matters had reached this pass Paterfamilias began to rub his eyes and stare and grin as at a circus. It was most amusing to see the once simple and unassuming partner of his joys and sorrows queening it awkwardly in the parlor. It was not unpleasant to have a servant or two about, he liked a glass of wine at table, he submitted to luncheon at noon and dinner in the evening, and but faintly objected to donning evening dress. In a word he had resigned himself to the new conditions and had even come to take a kind of pleasure in the thing, when Sherman's blistering gibes and riotous merriment opened his eyes to the folly into which he was drifting. Then he put his foot down, and at once there was a change. In many households the servants disappeared entirely, others were reduced in numbers and the ladies who had queened it so long in the parlor returned good-humoredly to the kitchen, not sorry, perhaps, that the play was over, and very well pleased with what they had gained.

Not that all resigned themselves. Mrs. Hammersmith very properly clung to her butler, and Mrs. Thompson continued to walk abroad with her nose high in the air as of yore, but even they were sadly obliged to acknowledge the force of public opinion when the Great Marblemore, in deference to the storm of ridicule aroused by Sherman's humorous warfare actually reduced the footing of his establishment, though this was perhaps due rather to Mrs. Marblemore's taking advantage of her opportunity, than to any

yielding on the banker's part. In his case, moreover, despite the great lengths to which he carried his love of ostentatious display, the effect had not been so noticeably ridiculous, both by reason of his vast wealth, which enabled him to live in all things in conformity with the standard which he chose to set himself, and because in Mrs. Marblemore he possessed a lady who bore herself in the midst of her surroundings with the calm repose and ease and graceful dignity of one to the manner born.

These momentous changes told here in a few words were not brought about in a moment. On the contrary, Sherman labored for many weeks ere any perceptible effect began to be felt; indeed, it was not until the journals of neighboring cities had fallen into line, and, catching the spirit of the thing, had formed themselves into an uproarious chorus from week to week, that Clarenceburg was thoroughly aroused. The uproar for a time was prodigious, for your hard-headed citizen when once aroused is apt to go to extremes, and Sherman's purpose was not to return to old conditions, but merely to do away with what was absurd in the new. He very much approved of evening dress for example; had no objection to calling his midday meal luncheon, nor to partaking sumptuously of dinner at seven. And so he labored away, counseling the retention of the butler and the cook, but strenuously declaring against the liveries and the genuflections. Things settled down by degrees; those good dames, who during his campaign had frowned upon him, began to smile once more, and Sherman presently renewed the discussion of his beloved theories with something of his old time enthusiasm.

But while thus virtuously employed in building up a reputation as a writer of pith and purpose, the matter which he had nearest of all at heart was not prospering as he could have wished. His love for Myrtle was both deep and lasting, and only failed of burning intensity because of all absence of serious rivalry or opposition. Myrtle pursued the even tenor of her way to all appearances contented and happy. She replied to his passionate glances with looks equally tender, she returned the pressure of his hand when he demanded such token of understanding, conversed with

him of an evening in the parlor where they spent many happy hours alone together, she listened with smiling eyes to his words of love and accepted his homage as tranquilly as if it were hers by right of being. She was quietly affectionate, nothing more. And this did not suit Sherman at all. He was a turbulent youth, full of vim and force and fire. He loved action and thought it no more than his right to be permitted occasionally to take his sweetheart in his arms and so enliven those evening hours, which now were nothing more than a tantalizing shadow of what might have been. But Myrtle, while she did not hold him at arm's length, would not brook presumption. Not that she ever had occasion to rebuke her too-adoring suitor, but her manner to him, sweet and tender always, was yet permeated by a quiet and gentle dignity which, while it forbade all familiarity, yet charmed his youthful senses and made him more in love than ever.

And so time passed on tranquil wings and might continue so to pass for aught Sherman knew for years to come. It was rather late in the summer when, all of a sudden, he awoke to a new element of danger, namely, the existence of an unsuspected rival whose presence filled him with scorn and indignation. The disturbing element was no less a personage than Elmer. That elegant young gentleman still continued idle, pursuing his profligate courses in a manner quite open and unashamed. Of late he had fallen into the habit of dropping into the old grey mansion of an evening, where he usually spent an hour or two, for the most part in Myrtle's company.

Myrtle received him as a friend, and Sherman, however much he chafed, could not but see that his dear girl was entirely innocent of any deeper feeling. Indeed, so far was she from suspecting Elmer's real motive in calling, that she firmly believed him betrothed to little Rosie, who as often as not was present at these evening parties, and never was permitted to walk home unattended when Elmer was of the company. Sherman was a good deal puzzled to account for Elmer's conduct here. He was himself so loyal and devoted to the idol of his heart that Elmer's evident double dealing was incomprehensible to him. What was he up to? Was

he tiring of little Rosie thus early? The little maid did not look as sunnily happy and cheerful as usual, he thought. He cursed the cheeky young fellow's impudence, but took excellent care not to dignify these overt attentions by the slightest notice, hostile or otherwise.

One day at an hour somewhat past noon, Sherman was walking arm in arm with Myrtle on that fashionable thoroughfare whereon stood the Watterson homestead. The sky was overcast with fleecy clouds through which the sun looked pale and cold, like a new moon environed by choking vapors. The gorgeous mansions lining the streets, with their innumerable turrets, towers, balconies and verandas, all piled one above another in the most fantastic manner, gave to the scene an aspect which if a trifle garish at first blush, was yet very beautiful, softened as was the whole by the still green freshness of the lawns and the foliage. The windows were all embellished within with snowy curtains; the walks curving and curling around the houses gleamed whitely on the lawns. Everything was neat and clean and sparkling.

"I'm glad summer is past," said Myrtle, presently.

"I'm not," replied Sherman. "You'll never go driving in the winter, nor riding."

"But we take long walks," cried Myrtle, laughing. "I think walking is much nicer."

She looked somewhat pale but exceedingly cheerful. It was one of her infrequent periods of depression; she could not work, and so like a sensible girl, she was spending the day with her lover. They had driven far across the prairies that morning, and returning had alighted at General Hamilton's headquarters, where they had lunched, spending an hour or two in cheerful conversation with their host, from whom they parted in the highest spirits.

"There's Mrs. Ringrose at the window," said Myrtle, waving her hand in greeting to that little woman as they passed the parsonage.

"Seems in rather low spirits," observed Sherman. "I wonder where her husband is gallivanting about?"

"Why, Sherman!" cried Myrtle, extremely shocked and indignant. "You should not speak that way of a minister."

"Bah!" growled the unrepentant youngster. "A whining hypocrite! Always cringing and wheedling and flattering. You know he is, Myrtle."

"I know nothing of the kind, sir. I think he's nice. I do," said Myrtle, stoutly. "You think there is nobody like Father Fargo."

"There isn't; not in the ministry. We're going hunting next week. Quail season opens. Great sport!"

"What good does it do you to go hunting?" asked Myrtle, scoffingly. "You never bring anything home. Father Fargo says you kill nothing but gophers; you always miss, he says, when you shoot at prairie chickens, or at a rabbit; and he declares you miss purposely."

"He's jealous," declared Sherman, waving him away.

"I believe him," announced Myrtle, nodding. "It's my opinion that you are too tender-hearted to kill anything Sherman."

"Pooh! Pooh!" cried Sherman, with a gesture implying great ruthlessness. "Fact is, I couldn't hit a barn if I were locked inside."

"A story!" cried Myrtle. "You simply can't bear to hurt anything. I'm afraid, Sherman, any one would have fared badly with you in the old pioneer days."

"There's where you are mistaken, Myrtle," cried Sherman, throwing out his chest, and looking big at a passing urchin, who shrank away in some alarm. "I'll bet I would have been a mighty hunter in those days. Supposing, Myrtle," he continued suddenly, lowering his voice, "supposing things were so—that there *was* a great hunting ground a few hundred miles west of here, and I going there to stake out a claim as many and many a better young fellow did a few years back; and supposing you were at home here with your father, as now, having everything a going, and—and, supposing Myrtle I—asked—you—to—" he paused here, feeling the issue too momentous to go on.

Myrtle looked down demurely.

"What, Sherman?" she asked.

"To—go—with—me!" he replied, very low. "Would you be afraid to trust yourself to me, Myrtle? Would you?"

"Among the Indians and all," said Myrtle, softly.

She was dallying as it were with her own emotions which at that moment were very sweet and tender. She knew, of course, of Sherman's love for her, although he had not yet ventured upon an absolute declaration. She knew, too, that she returned that love with all her heart and soul, but, oh, she did not mean to marry for years to come. The Cause needed her and she would devote herself to the Cause. Love could wait. In the meantime this hovering so to speak on the brink of the pool of passion was very, very sweet—all the sweeter because a trifle dangerous to her fixed purpose; so she smiled and looked into his ardent eyes with coquettish glances.

"Would you, Myrtle?" whispered Sherman, insistently.

"Gladly," she replied, giving him a glance that seemed a glimpse of heaven. "Hush!" she added. "Somebody is calling us."

And indeed Sherman heard his name called at that moment, and turning around, he beheld Aunt Sadie on foot hastening after them.

"I was with Mrs. Ringrose when you passed," explained the good lady, coming up panting. "And where are you going, my dears?"

"Home," replied Myrtle. "We've been everywhere and I feel ever so much better. We stopped at General Hamilton's and Benjamin took the horses home. The country is beautiful, Auntie; don't you wish you had come along?"

"I am so busy, my love. I'm calling on Mary now; won't you come along? Mary will be so pleased!"

To be sure would they. So they took Aunt Sadie between them, and walking three abreast, they proceeded townward, recounting in detail the glories of the morning, while Aunt Sadie in return told of her day which she as usual had spent among her ailing friends. They found Mrs. Marblemore at home entertaining various visitors. Mrs. Thompson was there and Mrs. Hammersmith and Mrs. Ferguson and Mrs. Markham, Aunt Sadie's dearest friends and neighbors, who, forming a group about their hostess, were chatting quietly.

Clara, too, was there, and Elmer joined them so promptly in the small drawing room that he must surely

have observed their arrival. The younger people drawing somewhat apart from the elder dames, as young people will, conversed in undertones.

Elmer engaged Myrtle in conversation, and Clara quite monopolized Sherman, who sitting beside the blooming girl fell to wondering why he could not like her. He liked all the girls he knew with the sole exception of Clara. With all his love for Myrtle he could have found it in his heart to kiss little Rosie, for example, or madcap Fanny, or dainty little Daisy, but he could by no stretch of imagination conceive himself as willingly embracing Clara. Why was this? She was more than pretty—beautiful in her robust womanhood; she was full of good nature; she was kind and gentle; she had many admirers among the young men of the town. Then why was this young woman so repulsive to him? The fault must lie with him. He tried to like her, but irritated by her open and persistent pursuit of him—why, that was it! Her boldness it was that repelled him! Sherman quite colored up and smiled as the solution of the vexing problem burst upon him, and Clara taking the blush and smile as her own bent towards him, placing her plump white hand on his arm.

"I like to see you smile like that, Sherman," she said softly.

"Do you?" replied Sherman, frowning instantly.

"It lights up your face wonderfully. You look so serious always. What are you always thinking about?"

"Oh, I don't know—one thing or another."

"Do you ever think of me?" asked Clara, archly.

"Sometimes."

"I won't ask you what you think, but I hope it's something nice. Would you like to see my pictures?"

"I don't care if I do," replied Sherman, glancing at Myrtle and Elmer. He did not like to leave his sweetheart alone with Elmer, but there was no help for it, so muttering an inward curse on his infernal luck the ill-conditioned cub rose and went with Clara.

Myrtle remained behind with Elmer. He was sitting very quietly for him, talking. Myrtle listened with an air

of abstraction, her eyes fixed upon Sherman, as he wandered here and there with Clara.

"I've been reading your articles right along, Myrtle," said Elmer.

"Have you, indeed. I wouldn't have thought that such matters would interest you."

"But they do. Everything you do interests me," said Elmer, with great earnestness.

Myrtle rather opened her eyes at this, but she said nothing.

"We used to be good friends years ago, Myrtle."

"I am not sure. I was dreadfully afraid of you I know, and always trembled when I met you."

"I was mean I know. I was always teasing you, but you don't think of that now?"

"No."

"I'm not naturally mean, Myrtle. Do you think I am?"

"Why, no," said Myrtle, wondering a little at his earnestness of manner.

"A little wild, perhaps?" he said with a smile.

He had an idea that his wildness rather recommended him to the good graces of women in general—an idea borne out probably by his experience with certain dowager dames of the city, who would gladly have given their daughters to this graceless, but wealthy young man.

"I don't know," replied Myrtle in a constrained tone of voice.

She knew, of course, of his doings. Clara talked of him a great deal and dwelt by preference on his general depravity, his nightly outings, his fondness for wine and the society of women of doubtful morals. Indeed it was a matter of general repute, and Myrtle always thought of Sherman with a deeper tenderness whenever she thought of Elmer.

"I'm going to work," said Elmer. He looked down at her as if he expected to see her overcome with astonishment and joy at this announcement, but was deeply chagrined to find that his resolution scarcely evoked any interest at all.

"Yes, I'm going to turn over a new leaf," he continued. "I'm tired of idleness. I'm tired of everything."

The poor fellow looked it. His pale face was thin and haggard, dark rings had formed around his eyes, and there was a twitching of the corners of his mouth and eyes not at all pleasant to witness. But he looked very handsome, nevertheless.

"Everybody ought to work," he said, "don't you think so?"

"Yes. I do think so."

"That's what I gathered from your writings and that is why I have determined to quit this idle life."

Again he looked at her to see what gratification, if any, his resolution, founded upon her expressed opinion, afforded her. She was regarding him thoughtfully, and greatly pleased he went on.

"My father's business burdens are getting too many for him. He wishes me to take some of them off his shoulders and I have determined to do so." The thing evidently appealed to him in the light of the heroic. "It will be rather hard on me—the confinement, I mean, and the application. I would not mind that, however, if my friends—if you, Myrtle, took enough interest in me to wish me well and to think of me sometimes."

He concluded in a low voice, looking at her with his sweet winning smile.

"I am sure that your friends will wish you well, Elmer," said Myrtle.

"Will you, Myrtle?"

"Surely."

Clara called Myrtle at this moment and she rose to go to her friend who stood near a neighboring window holding a small picture in her hand, the center of a group formed by all the ladies present. The picture was an excellent likeness of herself, showing her clad in the habiliments she wore when going through her athletic exercises. It was a dress designed rather for comfort and ease than for grace and beauty, consisting of a loose blousey waist and baggy breeches reaching to the knees. Her strong, round arms were bare to the elbow and her low-cut bodice, half con-

cealed, half revealed her breast and shoulders. The picture had just been handed her by a servant, and her cry had brought the others around her. Sherman seized the opportunity thus afforded to make his escape.

The ladies fell to discussing, not the picture, but the garb in which Clara was shown. Mrs. Hammersmith quite shuddered at the indelicacy of it all; Mrs. Thompson thought athletics revolting; Mrs. Marblemore smiled indulgently, but Aunt Sadie vigorously defended the young woman and stoutly declared herself in favor of athletics.

"Physical culture," said Aunt Sadie, learnedly, "is a science, and the noblest of sciences because the most useful, the most healthful and helpful to mankind. Depend upon it, my dears, if we practised it more we would all be in better health and better spirits. We would enjoy life more. Clara who devotes an hour or two every day to healthful exercises is never unwell. She is not troubled with headaches, or fainting spells. She is never peevish, but always good-natured, and bubbling over with fun. And look at her figure, her color; note how clear her eyes are, how healthful her skin. She has an excellent appetite, a vigorous digestion and at night she sleeps like a baby."

"But it is so indelicate," said Mrs. Hammersmith.

"In what way? I do not see it. To be sure, she need not have been photographed in this garb, but there is no harm in that; that is," added Aunt Sadie, hastily concealing the picture as she recalled her boy's presence in the room, "she ought not to show it thus publicly. Clara, I'm surprised at you," she concluded severely, "with my pure boy by."

Clara laughed, but blushed too, glancing in Sherman's direction.

"I had forgotten, Auntie," she said, "let's hide it."

And laughing gayly, she piled a great heap of books upon the offending picture.

A servant entered at that moment with a card which he presented to Mrs. Marblemore. She read the name upon it, her cheeks paling and blushing from some hidden emotion.

"Rev. Mortimer Ringrose."

She rose in the greatest agitation and murmuring a word of excuse to her guests she hastened away.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH A SHEPHERD TURNS WOLF.

Oh, the intelligence of the eye! The eloquence of a glance! What worlds of meaning can be conveyed in a single look! How eloquent are the eyes of lovers! How speaking the glance of the passion-ridden man or woman! The tongue is a puny instrument by comparison. What cannot the glance of an eye convey? It expresses love, hate, admiration, scorn, fear, courage—every sentiment, feeling, thought or passion of which a human being is capable.

When the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose presumed for the first time to gaze into the clear, blue eyes of Mrs. Marblemore with more than a glance of friendly interest—with a stare of unqualified admiration indeed, that lady was a good deal startled but, strange to say, not at all displeased. She glanced quickly at her unconscious husband and again at the minister, who returned her gaze with the same audacious look of admiration; and when he took her hand in his in friendly greeting he pressed it gently, but none the less with ardor, smiling the while into her wondering eyes. She withdrew her hand and turned away her eyes, but still she was not displeased, much less indignant. Their eyes met again and again—met quite across the church while she stood waiting her husband's pleasure as the minister went about distributing greetings among his flock. His eyes expressed open admiration, hers curiosity, wonder, surprise. It was their first meeting. The man's audacity challenged her interest. She understood the meaning of his glance and she tingled with a curious mixture of offended pride and secret pleasure. He was an eminently handsome man, and a brilliant and popular preacher. He had singled her out as the one most worthy of admiration. The thought tickled her vanity—still her pride revolted at the thought of any man presuming to gaze upon her with other than respectful feelings.

She went home thinking of him, and of his glance. She was a sensible woman, a woman of mature years, but still she could not—she did not try to banish thoughts at once unfaithful to her husband and dangerous to herself. What harm could such thoughts work upon her? She was no longer young; she had left the giddiness of girlhood far behind; she was strong, firm, sure of herself. Nevertheless she looked into her mirror with more than usual care that night. The glass reflected a face of great beauty, a beauty mellowed into that matronly loveliness which far surpassed mere girlish prettiness, and which to many men is infinitely more attractive. Her abundance of silky golden hair formed an appropriate crown to this lovely countenance and the figure unrivalled in exquisite proportions and in grace of outline completed the picture of a woman as charming and beautiful as any that ever blessed the eyes of man.

The Man who had admired her was very much in her thoughts that night and the following day. Other men had admired her, to be sure, but in their admiration was ever mingled that proportion of respect which tempers the glance to modest endurance, making it a delight to the purest of the sex. This man's bold presumption charmed her. He became to her The Man. Her last thought was of him when she fell asleep—her first called up his image on awakening. He came to her a few days later. He was announced while her husband was beside her, and curiously enough she had felt a sensation of guilt in the pleasure his coming gave her. Her cheeks became red with blushes and were still rosy when The Man came in. Her eyes were curious but timid, his were boldly admiring even in the presence of her husband. She knew that whatever his ostensible reason for calling, he had really come to see her, to express his admiration of her with his speaking eyes. She looked down while her husband was talking. She raised her eyes when The Man spoke, and always met his looking into hers. She caught his plea for support in the thing he desired. She gave it not reluctantly, but passively as if impelled by The Man's eyes. They fascinated her, made her afraid—she, a middle-aged woman! She sided with him against her husband when those eyes bade her, and by her interest gained

The Man's cause. Her husband went away but The Man stayed on, and talked of the project, but always his eyes told a different story.

The Man gone, she wandered about ill at ease, conscience-stricken, but always thinking of The Man—not with anger or abhorrence, but with secret delight, dwelling upon his every word and look. She thought of what his eyes had told her. She realized then what it meant, what she had been doing. She felt guilty and ashamed. Without forming any definite resolution she awaited her husband's home-coming to make some loving advances, a thing so unusual in the cold, undemonstrative wife as to greatly astonish and delight her husband. He did not understand her, and in honest endeavor to show his gratitude he awakened only her contempt and disgust, driving her farther from him and towards The Man.

The Man came again and again. He came every day, ostensibly to talk over his contemplated entertainment, but always his eyes told a different story. Nothing ever came of the entertainment, perhaps nothing was ever intended to come of it. The project was abandoned at the first ripple of opposition, but still The Man continued his visits. His coming was usually timed with the banker's absence. Mary was an idle woman. Time hung heavy on her hands. Elmer was now grown to manhood. Her love for him was no longer all-absorbing. She wanted something to fill her mind, something to occupy her thoughts. She was given to brooding fits of melancholy. The Man's presence enlivened her, revivified her as it were, carried her out of herself. He talked well of many things, of men he had met, of sights he had seen, of books he had read, of amusing adventures undergone. His voice was soft and musical, his laugh a little ripple of pure enjoyment, his gestures the perfection of grace, and his smile most engaging. His vivacious presence was soothing and fascinating to a woman of Mary's phlegmatic temperament. His eyes eloquently bespoke his admiration of her womanly charms, his tongue never. He was delicacy itself. He never shocked her wifely pride by so much as a whisper. His eyes pleaded for him. He sighed and his sighs spoke volumes. He pressed her hand

gently and the pressure strongly tempted Mary to return it. He showed himself melancholy at times, merry at others, lively or depressed, silent or talkative, and by his manner showed that his momentary mood was solely due to her reception of him. He displayed a thousand tokens of his secret passion, each more eloquent, more touching than the other, and every day his presence influenced her more; she came to look forward to his coming and met him when he came with open gladness, blushing like a giddy schoolgirl beneath his glance. This continued for many weeks. She did not know how it was all to end. She was really infatuated—that she knew, also she was afraid of what this infatuation might lead her to. She tried to resist it; she even tried in a feeble, ineffectual way to get away from The Man's influence.

"Let us go away, Andrew," she said one day.

"Why, Mary?"

"Oh, I'm tired. I want to travel. Let us go to Europe. Come, Andrew."

She did not look at him in making her plea. She could not meet his eyes, they were so kind and honest.

"I can't get away, Mary," he replied. "I am over my ears in business."

"Can't you get some one to look after your business for a while?"

"I could, perhaps, Mary, but not without a great loss of money."

She turned away with a bitter little smile. Always money, money, money. The man's soul was steeped in thoughts of it. She turned once more to The Man, but she tried again later—weeks later.

"Mr. Winslow has written Aunt Sadie, Andrew," she said one evening at table when Clara and Elmer were by, "he is not content in his new pastorate and he speaks regretfully of his old friends. He would like very much to return to us. Can you not manage it some way, Andrew?"

"What!" cried the banker, gayly, "send Brother Ringrose away? Why I thought you were great friends, Mary?"

"I do not know why you should think so," she replied

coldly. "I consult with him on church matters as I did with Mr. Winslow."

"Of course, Mary," said her husband, soothingly.

"Oh, you wouldn't send Mr. Ringrose away, Papa," cried Clara.

"He's so pretty," sneered Elmer.

"Mr. Ringrose seems to give general satisfaction," the banker said thoughtfully. "I see no reason for any change, Mary. And in any case Brother Winslow would never do now, you know."

After that Mary deliberately closed her eyes to what she called, in her less lucid intervals, the inevitable. She was capable of a deep but not a lasting passion. Even her love for her child had waned during the years of separation. She was an innocent woman. Unchaste thoughts found no lodgment in her mind; but on the other hand her sense of shame was not acute. Loveless wedlock had in a large measure blunted her womanly delicacy. She was given to brooding over her lot. Her life to her mind had for many years been grossly immoral. She had lost all her self-respect. She lived in constant scorn of self, and the temptation, coming into her life at this time found her ripe for anything. In the state of mind into which she by her constant brooding had fallen, the step she contemplated seemed scarcely a step downward. And so she came to look forward to the end with a dreadful calmness. She now lived in daily expectation of a crisis. The Man was becoming bolder. His voice always gentle and caressing had become almost tender, his sighs more frequent, his eyes more eloquent. The pressure of his hand seemed to demand an answering pressure.

Thus matters stood on that evening when, sitting in the midst of her friends, The Man was announced. Mary hastened in the greatest agitation to the small reception-room, just off the dining-room where she usually received him. His coming always agitated her, but this was his second visit that day. Her step was rapid, her eyes very bright, her brain in a whirl, as she hurried to meet him, for something told her that the crisis in her life was at hand. He came a step to meet her, as faultless in attire, as irreproachable in manner, as handsome, as smiling as ever. Was he

really about to speak? She asked herself the question tremblingly as she faced him. She gave him a pale little smile and waited, her heart palpitating like any girl's expecting her first proposal.

"I understand that you have company," he said, smiling, "and I will not detain you long. I am going away for a day or two—two days to Traviston—perhaps to Chicago."

He paused and his eyes roved away shiftily. His white hand moved uneasily to his chin. She regarded him with a never wavering glance, and somehow her direct gaze made him uneasy.

"I shall start tonight on the latest train which leaves at 6:20. I expect to remain in Chicago tomorrow and Friday, and perhaps Friday night."

"Go on," her eyes spoke the words, but no sound came from her lips.

"I am wholly unknown in the city. It is very large."

She understood him. His cowardice appeared to her, in the light of the glamour which her fancy had woven around him, as the purest delicacy. She understood him well and the color flowed into her cheeks.

"Shall I meet you there?"

The question formed itself in her mind. It was on the tip of her tongue, her lips moved but they uttered no sound. Her eyes looked straight into his and he no longer sought to evade them. She looked very beautiful at that moment. She wore a pretty negligee gown of a pale blue color; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes glowed brilliantly, her scarlet lips were half parted as she stood looking up at him. His eyes glowed with passionate admiration. He seized her hand and kissed it once, twice, three, four times ere she could withdraw it. Having done so she retreated a step frightened it would seem—astonished, and, aye—indignant!

"Good-bye," he said without noting these little symptoms. "Good-bye, Mary."

She did not reply and he went away. She sank heavily into a chair, and with her hands folded in her lap sat for a long time gazing straight in front of her. What were the thoughts seething in her brain? What the sensations stirring her heart almost to bursting? Who can tell? She

smiled, she blushed and paled again; she moved uneasily and cast furtive glances around her. She rubbed the hand which he had kissed, glancing down at it with a strange expression of repugnance. Her cheeks still glowed when with a sudden recollection of her guests she rose to go to them. But before going, as if impelled by an invisible power within her she hastened upstairs to her chamber and washed the hand that had lain in The Man's and which he had touched with his lips.

Aunt Sadie and Myrtle were adjusting their hats ready to take their departure. Mary spoke her adieus in a subdued voice, avoiding her friend's eyes. She blushed the more when Aunt Sadie, remarking upon her wonderful color, bent and kissed her cheek. She followed Aunt Sadie's stately form with her glance to the last, her eyes expressing deep shame and contrition.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH AUNT SADIE GOES ON HER ROUNDS.

"Are you quite sure, Franklin," said Aunt Sadie, pursing her mouth, "quite sure that we paid sixty-four cents for the raisins? My impression is that it was sixty-three."

"Sixty-four, Miss Sadie," replied Franklin, firmly.

"Thank you," nodded Aunt Sadie; "of course you would know. Sixty-four then; and the preserves, Franklin, the peaches and apricots? Eighty cents in all, were they not?"

"Yes, Miss Sadie. Eight quarts at ten cents a quart."

"Thank you very much, Franklin. It is very important that I make no mistakes in my household accounts, you understand? Do sit down, Katy. Is my boy gone, Emma?"

"No, Miss Sadie; Mr. Sherman is just going."

A moment later Sherman came into the kitchen where Aunt Sadie sat surrounded by her faithful servitors, busily engaged in putting her household accounts in order. The prodigious energy which Aunt Sadie put into this task; the way she wrinkled up her brows in pondering important items; the manner in which she compressed her mouth in setting them down, the deep earnestness with which she went about her labors and the sagacious nods with which she accompanied the whole were all delightful to witness. Everything that was ever purchased for housekeeping purposes was most painstakingly set down in Aunt Sadie's household books, but as she had never in all her lifetime thought of adding up the total at the end of the month, and knew no more the amount of her actual expenditures at the end of the year than she knew in the beginning, it may be questioned whether all this labor was not so much energy wasted. But Aunt Sadie did not think so.

"Hard at work, Auntie?" said Sherman, coming into the kitchen. "Shall I lend a hand?"

"No, darling," replied Aunt Sadie, shaking her head

very earnestly; "I must attend to the household accounts myself. It is hard though, I never was very good at figures. Geography and arithmetic were two very terrible spectres to me in my school days. I never got beyond long division, and I never could bound any State. I know that New York is east of Illinois and that California is west; but that is as far as my knowledge of geography extends," continued Aunt Sadie, wrinkling up her nose and laughing very heartily. "My impression always has been that Illinois is the very center of America."

"It is, Auntie," Sherman declared, pressing his cheek to hers. "Clarenceburg—this kitchen—is the center of the universe when you are in it."

"My sweet child! Katy, if you don't sit down this minute I shall scold you!"

"And let my work go undone?" cried Katy with scorn. "No, no, Miss Sadie!"

"I will help you with your work. Please, Katy."

So Katy sat herself rigidly erect on the other side of the table, and Aunt Sadie beaming upon her turned to her books again. Sherman went away after embracing his adoring Aunt.

"Now, Franklin, that my boy has gone—dear me!" cried Aunt Sadie, starting up as the bell rang out sharply; "who can be calling so early in the morning? I do hope Mrs. Sawyer isn't unwell, or Mrs. Sidenbender's baby now. I do sincerely hope that it isn't Mrs. Sidenbender's little darling Joe. Will you go, Franklin?"

To be sure would Franklin. He returned in a moment, but before he could announce the visitor, she followed him into the kitchen in the person of Mrs. Marblemore.

"My gracious, Mary!" cried Aunt Sadie, radiant with joy. "Is it you? I'm so glad to see you so early. You dear Mary!"

"Did I surprise you, Auntie?" said Mary smiling faintly. "I mean to spend the day with you if I may?"

"I shall be delighted, Mary," cried Aunt Sadie; "and you will come with me to see my friends?"

"Yes, Auntie. When do you start?"

Oh, not for hours yet! Aunt Sadie had ever so much

to do first! In the meantime she led the way into the parlor and settling herself in her comfortable rocker, she plunged into an interminable account of the doings and happenings in her little world. Mary, with a restlessness much like that which animated Elmer at times, went running about the room, plumping herself into this chair, then that, only to start up afresh every moment.

"You mustn't leave me all day, Auntie," she cried suddenly interrupting her friend. "Not for a single minute, mind!"

"Why, how very funny, Mary," said Aunt Sadie, regarding her in wonder. "How very strange, my dear."

Mary said nothing, but smiling into the good lady's eyes she shook her head rebelliously as if in the old days of her widowhood.

"One of your funny whims, Mary?" asked Aunt Sadie smiling.

"Yes, Auntie, one of my whims."

It was nearly noon when the phaeton was brought around with big brown Bessie in the shafts, and Aunt Sadie drove away with her friend.

"We'll call first on old Sergeant Morrissey," cried Aunt Sadie, laughing gayly as they started forth. "He's afflicted with rheumatism, poor man, but he's the merriest old fellow in the world for all that. Here's where he lives."

She brought Bessie to a standstill in front of a rusty looking frame cottage and they alighted. After duly patting Bessie's nose, Aunt Sadie took up a small basket of which half a dozen had been placed in the phaeton by the incomparable Franklin, and followed closely by her friend, she entered the yard and approached the door, treading her way carefully along the board walk to avoid the yawning ruts and holes. Knocking gently she opened the door and led the way in entering breezily with a smile upon her lips.

"Good morning to yez, Leddy Bountiful," was the greeting she received from an old weather-beaten fellow who sat beside a window, pipe in mouth. "It's swate yez are lookin' this mornin', my bonny leddy!"

"You're blarneying me again, Sergeant," cried Aunt

Sadie gurgling with laughter. "You're a gay deceiver, so you are!"

"No, no, Leddy Bountiful," protested the Sergeant, limping forward to relieve her of the basket, which he carefully deposited beside Aunt Sadie's chair, handling it with the disinterested air of one utterly ignorant of its contents or destination.

"I mind the toime when yez were only a little shlip of a gurl, Leddy Bountiful," continued Sergeant Morrissey, regarding the smiling lady out of a pair of exceedingly roguish eyes; "yez ud come across the track where meself was watchman fur thirty-five years goin' to your father's broom factory—only a little shlip of a gurl no bigger than me two thumbs."

Aunt Sadie shook her head in vehement denial, laughing heartily all the time.

"And who is th' purty gurl yez got with yez this mornin', Leddy Bountiful? Ah, it's the great leddy who lives in the castle, is it? Good mornin' to yez, my dear."

"Good morning, Sergeant," replied Mary sweetly.

She was greatly taken with the gallant old fellow's manner and amused by his drolleries.

"How have you been doing these last few days, Sergeant?" asked Aunt Sadie.

"Foinely, foinely, Leddy Bountiful," replied the Sergeant, still regarding Mary with his head held very much on one side.

"You must sit in the sun as much as possible, Sergeant."

"Do yez but come wanst in a while, ye purty cratur, and the sun may go out for me."

"Ah, you naughty blarneyer! Well, Sergeant, we must go now. Good-bye. Take care of yourself."

"Good-bye, Sergeant," smiled Mary.

"It's a long time since me poor house has been honored be so much swateness and beauty," said the gallant veteran, bowing them out.

"He's the dearest old fellow," cried Aunt Sadie; "I nearly die with laughing sometimes listening to his droll stories. He served in the English army in his youth and he is chock-full of funny experiences from his soldier days.

He is always merry despite his poverty and his affliction."

"Let us return, Sadie, and give him some money," said Mary."

"By no means!" cried Aunt Sadie; "do not offer money to any of my friends, Mary. It would wound them grievously. They are not in want. They are proud, Mary, and would repudiate anything savoring of charity with scorn. I take them little delicacies, such as fruits and wines and medicines. That is all. They know and their neighbors know that my visits are merely in the way of friendly calls."

"Do you really enjoy going around this way, Auntie?"

"Indeed I do. My friends all love me and that is a great happiness."

"You do much good, Sadie."

"No, Mary, no! Do not think of it in that way. I am really very selfish in doing what I do."

"Selfish, Auntie!"

"Yes, Mary," said Aunt Sadie firmly. "There is no merit in doing what we love to do is there? If my friends were to become cold to me; if they were to close their doors to me forbidding me to visit them, I believe I should die of grief. Let me see, we'll call on the Thompsons next. Their little girl is so sick, poor thing."

They were received at the door of a stately mansion by a motherly looking woman, who immediately led the way into an inner room. A young girl lay on a couch beside the window. Her thin, pale face told of long suffering. She smiled brightly at sight of Aunt Sadie, but took no notice at all of Mary, who seated herself somewhat in the background.

It was pretty to see how lovingly Aunt Sadie bent over the sick girl, murmuring soft words of hope and cheer. She smoothed back the patient's silky hair with a gentle hand, and throughout her stay her soft palm glided soothingly over the sick girl's brow and across the throbbing temples which seemed to afford the child intense relief and gratification.

"Spring is coming my little pet," Aunt Sadie's caressing voice came to Mary. "The sun is shining brightly now

and the wind is blowing from the south, and soon, very soon the flowers will bloom and the birds will sing, and the trees will blossom radiantly, and then my little pet will be out in the sun and wind singing in emulation of the birds, and her cheeks will bloom and her eyes will shine in glorious rivalry with the flowers. Will not that be nice, pet? All this will come to pass my love. Only trust in the good God. Pray to Him daily, my dear, hourly."

"Good Aunt Sadie!" whispered the afflicted girl, drawing down the soothing hand and pressing it to her pale lips. "You must come to me every day—every day, Auntie! I am so happy when you are with me. Will you come tomorrow, Aunt Sadie?"

"Tomorrow and the next day and the next day and every day until my little girl is well and strong again."

"Sweet Aunt Sadie," said the child, kissing the kind hand again.

Aunt Sadie talked on in a low soft voice, speaking words of hope and encouragement. The gentle murmur came to Mary sounding far, far away. She sat there staring like one in a dream. She saw not the sick girl, she saw *the Man* awaiting her. Unable longer to endure the thoughts engendered by this picture, she sprang up saying, "Come, Aunt Sadie."

But the sick girl clung to Aunt Sadie's hand and casting a beseeching glance around at her friend, the good lady sat down again.

"She is dreadfully afraid of death, poor little thing," said Aunt Sadie, when they were in the phaeton again; "and naturally. It is very hard to come into this beautiful world and live just long enough to comprehend the joys in store for you and then to be obliged to die and leave it all."

"She was made happy by your coming, Sadie," said Mary.

"Yes; it is dreadful to lie ill for weeks and weeks at a time. You know that Mary, and how glad you were to have your friends come to see you. I have never been ill, but I have seen enough of illness to know how hard it is. Time passes so slowly. There is no diversion; there is weakness of body, listlessness of mind, racking pain perhaps

and often the dread fear of death. Now we'll call on Mrs. Sawyer."

Mrs. Sawyer was a near neighbor of Mrs. Marblemore, occupying a gorgeous house just across the street from the Marblemore mansion. It was as cunningly furnished within as if designed for the habitation of a pretty bird. And Mrs. Sawyer its mistress was a young wife, a pretty little woman with rosy cheeks and timid smiling eyes. She was not unwell in body but decidedly despondent in mind, for Mrs. Sawyer was about to become a mother for the first time, and when she thought of the ordeal in store for her, her cheeks became pale and her smiling eyes took on a frightened look that without doubt made Mrs. Sawyer very attractive in Mr. Sawyer's eyes.

"It isn't that I fear for the outcome, Aunt Sadie," said Mrs. Sawyer, clasping Aunt Sadie's hand in both her own and looking from her to Mary, "not at all. Henry is quite sure that I will be all right, and of course Henry knows, but I am dreadfully, fearfully, horridly afraid of pain."

"But you shouldn't be, Tessie," said Aunt Sadie soothingly, "should she, Mary? You won't mind it at all, will she Mary? I'll be here you know," added Aunt Sadie nodding, as if all pain fled before her cheerful presence.

Mrs. Sawyer brightened up a good deal at this.

"And then, what is a wee little bit of pain when borne for Henry's sake, Tessie?"

"Nothing," said Tessie, smiling brightly, "nothing at all."

"And then, Tessie," said Aunt Sadie, taking Tessie's cheeks in her hands and looking deep into Tessie's eyes, "think of the great happiness in store for you. To have a baby of your own, Tessie—your very own!"

"And Henry's," cried Tessie laughing joyously.

"And Henry's, to be sure. Isn't that worth bearing a little pain for?"

"Yes, indeed."

Tessie had never thought of it in that light before; she felt quite heroic and became as cheerful and lively as the proverbial cricket.

"You must not think of the pain at all, dear Tessie,

but of the great joy in store for you, of Henry's delight and of the supreme happiness of giving life to a child who will some day be a great man like Henry, or a grand and beautiful woman like Mary here."

"Like Aunt Sadie," said Mary with a pale little smile."

"Yes," said Tessie quite comfortably, "like Aunt Sadie."

Then Aunt Sadie fell to picturing the future to Tessie's delighted eyes. She would soon be sitting in her rocker with her baby in her arms or taking it out riding in the beautiful baby carriage which Henry would procure, walking by Henry's side with everybody looking on and saying, "There goes Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer and the baby!" Tessie quite shrieked with delight at a picture so enchanting. Aunt Sadie went further. The baby would soon be toddling about and lisping "Papa" and "Mama," and then it would learn to walk and finally to talk clearly and intelligently and then away to school. Aunt Sadie's glowing eloquence quite surprised Mary and for a moment arrested her brooding thoughts and turned them into a purer channel. As for Tessie, she was laughing like a little mad creature, and when they finally arose to take their leave she insisted on accompanying them to the front door and did so, walking slowly and clasping Aunt Sadie's hand all the way. They saw her cheerful, rosy face peeping out at them from behind the curtains and Aunt Sadie gayly waved her hand to her.

They visited many people during the afternoon. Mrs. Winston had a sick baby, a little boy of two years who stared up at Aunt Sadie out of a pair of beautiful brown eyes, very much like her own, as she tenderly smoothed back his curls; Mrs. Hampton's husband, who was recovering from a fever was peevish and ill-humored, but he became very cheerful and tractable when Aunt Sadie promised him her intercession with Mr. Langhorn, Mr. Hampton's employer, with a view to having Mr. Hampton's position held open for him until his recovery; Mrs. Brownlow was a victim of dropsy, and there was positively no cheering her up; Mrs. Littlefield's husband was a sot and a loafer, and the little Littlefields, of whom there were of course, eight or nine, were in consequence rather hungry and forlorn. Aunt Sadie despatched a note to Ferguson, the grocer, by the eldest Lit-

tlefield boy and no doubt the family, not excepting Mr. Littlefield, fared well that evening. Susan McDonald was motherless and but ten years old, but Susan looked after four little brothers and sisters during her father's working hours. She came in for a good deal of petting at Aunt Sadie's hands; Miss Mumford was an old maid, very taciturn, very deaf and very ill-natured—and so on. Aunt Sadie visited them all and with the greatest possible patience listened to their sighs and plaints, soothing their woes with words of hope and courage.

As the day advanced Mary became more and more restless. She quite clung to Aunt Sadie's arm when they were in the street.

"Don't leave me for a single instant, Auntie," she said imploringly, and Aunt Sadie smiled at her friend's queer whim and kept close beside her.

It was late in the evening when Aunt Sadie after several brief stops drew up in front of the Ringrose parsonage. Mary awoke with a start from a fit of abstraction into which she had sunken.

"Are—are you going in there, Sadie?" she asked in a low voice.

"Only for a moment, Mary. I want to see Mrs. Ringrose."

"I will wait, Sadie," gasped Mary, very pale and agitated.

"No, Mary, you must come with me. I am not to leave you for a moment you remember."

"But—but—"

"Come Mary," said Aunt Sadie.

She stood smiling but inexorable, and Mary after one agonizing glance into her face alighted, and together they went into the pretty parsonage where Mrs. Ringrose received them, sitting all huddled up before an open fire-place with the children playing around about her. She looked somewhat pale and disheveled. She was very near confinement again and her wan appearance was no doubt largely due to her condition.

"Well, my dear," said Aunt Sadie cheerily; "how are you today?"

"I'm not feeling at all well," replied Mrs. Ringrose plaintively.

"Pooh! pooh! my dear; you only imagine so!" Aunt Sadie declared preemptorily. "You should move about a little, my love."

"I can't," replied the little woman shivering. "Now, Aunt Sadie, please don't scold me or else I'll cry, and that will start the children."

She gazed with large defiant eyes at Aunt Sadie, who now had taken the youngest of the children upon her lap and was engaged in washing the dirt from the little face. The others had gathered clamoring around the good lady. Mary from the background looked on this scene with dilating eyes. Mrs. Ringrose plunged into a long drawn account of her manifold symptoms, intermingling peevish complaints against the doctor whose medicines did her no good; against her husband for absenting himself at this particular time; against her children who were so naughty; against Aunt Sadie for coming in and disturbing her so thoughtlessly; against all the world in short which did not and never could understand Mrs. Ringrose. Aunt Sadie listened good-humoredly, the while continuing her cheery ministrations.

She was a frequent visitor at the parsonage. Mrs. Ringrose never was wholly well and one or another of the children was always ailing. The minister's wife was at best a helpless little creature always worrying peevishly, always complaining with that martyr-like air you know of. She considered herself the most abused little woman in the world. All the elements of nature conspired against her peace of mind. Rainy weather depressed Mrs. Ringrose; sunshine hurt her eyes; hot weather irritated her; cold weather made her shiver; the wind reddened her nose—in short, all weathers were alike designing and disagreeable to her. So she remained steadfastly at home with closed doors and darkened windows until Aunt Sadie's advent upon the scene.

That autocratic personage descended upon the luckless little woman like the iconoclast she was, and all went down before her. Doors and windows were thrown wide during the summer months. She forced Mrs. Ringrose out on long

walks every day; the children were taken out in Aunt Sadie's own phaeton and encouraged to play in the open. Everything was aired, swept, cleaned and polished under Aunt Sadie's good-humored supervision. She wrought on the whole a wonderful change both in Mrs. Ringrose and in her household in the course of a few weeks, but through it all Mrs. Ringrose persisted in regarding her cheery benefactor as a despot and a tyrant. She was, however, a timid little soul and dared not rebel against Aunt Sadie's high-handed assumption of authority.

"Goodness only knows how I stand it," said Mrs.Ringrose turning to Mary who sat pale and cold with her skirts gathered about her. "Everybody is so irritating. I never have a moment's peace at all, what with the children and the neighbors, who surely are the queerest women in the world, and so I tell Mortimer. And now *he* had to go away just at this time when I need him so much."

And the poor little woman fell to crying piteously.

"But he will be back very soon now, my dear," said Aunt Sadie said soothingly. "I wouldn't cry. Look at the baby. See how pretty he is and how he smiles at you. Look, he wants to go to you."

Mrs. Ringrose dried her eyes and smiled at the little one, who indeed was gurgling and crowing in infantine glee and holding out his arms with such a bewitching smile, that the mother fairly caught him to her heart laughing in pure sympathy.

"You have such a pretty family, my love—has she not, Mary?" continued Aunt Sadie, "and such a nice home and a husband both kind and helpful, I am sure. Why worry over trifles which after all are only of the moment. Think of the many poor women, my dear, who have no pretty home like yours; no husband to love them; no children to gladden their hearts."

"But everybody is so irritating," said Mrs. Ringrose, who was smiling now however very cheerfully.

"You only think so. Depend upon it, my dear, people are exactly as you would have them. Smile at them now and they will smile back at you, laugh and they will gladly share your gladness, speak them fairly and they will speak

kindly to you and of you; but frown at all who approach you, and you will reap frowns and nothing else; ask Mary."

"It is funny isn't it?" said the little woman, innocently; "the way people are. I've always noticed that. Must you go, Auntie?" added she, rising as Aunt Sadie rose. "Come again, do, I am always glad to see you."

"Are you tired, Mary?" asked Aunt Sadie when they were once more in the street.

"No, no, Sadie," Mary replied, settling herself with a deep breath of relief; "not tired."

It was growing dark now, and Bessie was headed homeward.

"It is good being with you, Auntie!" Mary said presently; "how everybody loves you! All are eager for a smile or a word from you. Look, how the children rush to the windows! The very babies hold out their arms shrieking 'Aunt Sadie!' You are very happy, Sadie, are you not?"

"Yes, very happy."

"Supremely happy? As happy as a woman may be?"

"I did not say that, Mary," replied Aunt Sadie gravely. "I did not say that at all."

"But you are. Is there anything lacking in your life that would make for your greater happiness?"

"Can you ask that, Mary—you who have a son—a husband? Think, Mary."

"You have a boy you know, Sadie."

"Yes, but he is not my own, Mary. Not my *very* own!"

Oh, the wistful yearning in her voice! The haunting sorrow of her eyes! Mary remained silent—awed.

"Sadie you could have married long ago. You know that," said Mary, after a long silence.

"Yes, Mary, I know that."

"Then why, Sadie?"

"One does not marry a man merely out of friendly regard, Mary. There must be a deeper feeling. There must be love, for marriage without love is to my mind immoral."

"Immoral, Sadie? That is a hard word."

"But a true one, Mary."

"Then a woman who in a moment of madness has en-

tered into such a marriage lives an immoral life as long as she continues in it?"

"Yes, grossly immoral."

"And she would be no worse if she left her husband for another man."

"Oh, yes, Mary, very much worse."

"Where does the difference lie?" cried Mary recklessly. "She is living a life of immorality, you say."

"Two wrongs do not make a right, my dear. The very thought should make a woman shrink away in horror."

"Then you cannot imagine a woman so lost to all virtue as to contemplate such a step?"

"Yes, Mary, I can imagine such. The step you speak of would not appear so very abhorrent to a woman who has lived for years in loveless wedlock. Her moral sense would without doubt become deadened."

"Yes, that is it," cried Mary, in a half-stifled voice. "Oh, Sadie, that is it!"

"But my love, how strange you are today. You must not let your mind dwell upon such gloomy things. Why should you? You are happily married and your life is laid out in a straight course before you. Follow it, my beautiful Mary, like the good, pure woman you are, and always be as you are now—a shining example to us all."

Mary reached up her arms and embraced her friend.

"Oh, Sadie," she said sobbing, "Oh, my good, sweet Sadie. Let me down here. Good-bye. It is after six, is it not?"

"Yes, Mary."

Mary alighted at her home and hastened into the great mansion, leaving Aunt Sadie wondering very much at the singular mood her darling had been in all day.

Mary hastened to her chamber and sank exhausted into a chair.

"One day is gone thank God," she murmured with a sigh.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHOWS THE WOMAN'S PROGRESSIVE UNION IN SOLEMN CONCLAVE.

"I should like to go with you this morning, Clara," said Mrs. Marblemore, "that is, if visitors are permitted to attend your meetings."

"By all means, Mama," replied Clara in her smiling, amiable way. "We shall be glad to have you."

Mary looked pale and listless, as if she had spent a sleepless night. Her eyes, however, shone unnaturally bright. A very demon was urging her on towards the black abyss. She resisted strongly, but fearful that if left alone to her haunting thoughts, she would inevitably yield to their direful promptings, she sought the company of a spirit stronger than her own. She had spent a day with Aunt Sadie and in parting from her, the victory was half won; today she planned to spend with Clara in the hope of meeting at least with diversion and so distract her thoughts.

"How soon are you going, Clara?" she asked in feverish impatience.

"In half an hour. The meeting does not take place until afternoon but I like to spend an hour or two in the gymnasium, and besides I have to put the finishing touches to my paper."

The half hour dragged along slowly but Clara was ready to the minute.

"Will you walk, Mama?" she asked, "or shall I have the carriage brought around. The weather is a little cool but pleasant for walking."

Knowing Clara's preference, Mary voted for the walk, and they sallied forth from the great mansion, two oddly contrasting figures. Mrs. Marblemore, elegantly gowned, her long skirts sweeping the ground, glided onward, carrying herself with a queenly grace that was natural to this charming woman; and Clara, clad in a plain tailor-made gown, whose

skirt reached barely below her ankles. She walked with a queer undulating movement of the body which was not a gliding motion but resembling it, nor an easy stride but akin to it, nor yet an ambling pace, though not unlike it. It was a compound of all three, a queer seductive wriggling which, encompassing the whole body, set every muscle in the arms, hips and bust aquivering. She swung her arms freely as she walked and drew in long, deep breaths, her billowy bosom rising and falling in grand harmony with her wide freedom of movement and robust physique.

They continued toward town in absolute silence, Mary busied with her thoughts and Clara, wearing that expression of haughty reserve, which in common with her father, she saw fit to assume in public. It was the latter part of September, cool and cloudy but dry. The foliage on the trees that lined the streets was rapidly assuming the varying tints of autumn. The palatial residences one following upon another, and all rioting in fantastic shapes and glaring colors, completed a scene as beautiful as Nature supplemented by art can make.

The meeting-hall of the Woman's Progressive Union was in the same building in which the Clarenceburg Woman's League had its quarters, only a floor higher. The rooms were fitted up more elaborately than those occupied by the elder club. Mary was greatly astonished at the magnificence of the place, but Clara hurried her stepmother into the gymnasium in the rear which was her especial pride and delight. It was equipped with every modern appliance for the exercise of the muscles and the body. Mary surveyed the various contraptions—the swinging bars resembling trapeze, the turning poles, jumping hurdles, dumbbells, punching bag, boxing gloves, foils and elastic accoutrements of all kinds—with an air of extreme repugnance.

"What do you do with these things?" she said, catching sight of a pair of foils, and retreating a step before them.

Clara laughed. "We practice with them, Mama," she said. "It hardens the muscles of the arms and gives the body excellent exercise."

"And do you use these too?" asked Mary, touching the boxing gloves with the tip of her shoe.

"Very rarely. I don't like them much and the girls don't care for boxing."

"I should think not, indeed," said Mrs. Marblemore, shuddering. "I do not see how Myrtle can permit such things."

"Myrtle has nothing to do with it. I have sole charge of this department. I fitted it up and I instruct the girls in athletics. You must come down some time and watch us at our exercises. We meet every Tuesday and Friday for athletic instruction and every Monday and Thursday for intellectual discussion. It is great fun—athletics—and the girls are all very much interested. Wait until I change my dress, Mama, and I'll show you."

She hurried into an inner room and in ten minutes returned completely transformed. Her throat and arms were bared to the shoulders. She wore a loose fitting blousey waist and baggy breeches reaching to the knees. Below them her finely rounded limbs snugly encased in black hose, showed sturdily, and shoes of exceeding lightness completed her attire.

"Now watch me, Mama," she cried.

Mary did watch with dilating eyes the astonishing feats performed by this smiling girl. Catching firm hold of two large rings suspended by a couple of stout ropes from the ceiling, she swung backward and forward, first supported by the hands, then head downward, with her legs thrust through the rings. Then lightly springing to the floor, she caught hold of a bar, and drew herself up slowly by main strength until her chin touched the bar, then lowering herself, she rose again and again, performing a feat requiring extraordinary strength and endurance a dozen times in succession. She performed miracles of daring upon the bar, whirling around and around with dizzying rapidity. The exercise left the girl glowing and panting, but clear-eyed and supple. Mrs. Marblemore stood breathless with astonishment and admiration.

"Good heavens, Clara," she cried, "you'll kill yourself some day."

"Bah!" said Clara, laughing. "There is not the slightest danger."

She went through the various exercises to show how to exercise the muscles in the arms and thighs, how to strengthen the back, how to acquire grace of movement and elasticity of step. She swung the dumbbells around her head with amazing vigor; posed, foil in hand, punched the bag, and laughingly offered to put on the gloves with Mary. They spent altogether two hours in the gymnasium and if the good-natured girl's endeavors served no other purpose, they served to distract the thoughts of her harassed stepmother.

Changing her dress, Clara again conducted Mary to the meeting room, which in place of many small tables was furnished simply with one long one around which chairs to the number of twenty were placed. The table was littered with papers, periodicals and books. There were many shelves fixed against the walls all crowded with fat volumes dealing with the "Development," "Progress" and "Emancipation" of woman. Mary examined them curiously, but with the same expression of repugnance with which she had regarded the athletic appliances in the gymnasium. None of these things appealed to her. She was interested in nothing, cared for nothing, could think of nothing but of The Man awaiting her. Members began dropping in after a while with whom the amiable lady conversed in smiling cordiality. Mary was not proud. She was a thorn in the side of a certain coterie of Clarenceburg ladies who would fain have formed into an exclusive social set but found it impossible because of Mrs. Marblemore's persistent refusal to join in their scheme. The banker's lady extended the same degree of cordial welcome to Mrs. Ferguson as to Mrs. Hammersmith, receiving the grocer's wife's neighborly call, and as often as not returning it, in preference to attending the swell reception of the aristocratically inclined lady. So while she was cordially hated by the set in question, her more humbly placed neighbors worshiped her.

They called at the bank and carried the banker away with them, repairing in his company to Trainor's, where they dined in one of the snug private rooms which Trainor held reserved for his more exclusive patrons. Mr. Marblemore was in high spirits. He laughed and joked a good deal, rallying Mary on her air of abstraction, but he did not

succeed in arousing her. Leaving the banker stretched at ease, taking his usual midday nap, Mary and Clara returned to the meeting room. Myrtle was there. She came to meet Mary in cordial welcome. The girls came in in rapid succession, after one o'clock, a bevy of chattering little creatures bubbling over with fun. They greeted Mrs. Marblemore with evident pleasure, and as that lady, according to her habit, showed herself amiable and responsive to their smiling friendliness, they gathered around her, a merry band, and there ensued a period of gay chatter which continued until Myrtle called the meeting to order. There were about twenty young women in attendance. Mary, sitting in the background, looked on rather listlessly through the opening of routine business.

Myrtle had long ago accurately gauged the patience of her companions, and had decreed that but two papers were to be read at each meeting, Clara Marblemore and Fanny Rowland were to be the speakers of the day. Mrs. Marblemore assumed an air of interested attention when Clara rose. Her paper was entitled "The Athletic Girl." It was well written and finely delivered, but it did not by any means confine itself to the subject. It began by recounting the benefits to be derived by women and through women to the human race as a whole through athletic games and exercises, which were coming more and more into practice, and almost at once started off into a discussion of woman's liberties and restrictions.

"Time was," said Clara in part, "and comparatively recently when athletics were regarded as debasing to woman, but that time is now happily past. In those days women were barred from colleges and forbidden the professions. Her attempts to engage in business were frowned upon, her pretensions to equality with man ridiculed; her sphere of activity was confined strictly to the home. She spent her life in humble attendance upon her husband, who was in fact, as well as in name, her absolute lord and master.

"This state of semi-slavery is now a thing of the past. The woman of the twentieth century has stepped forth and boldly proclaimed her liberty. She has demanded her rights and to some purpose. She has been admitted to the colleges

on terms of equality with man; she is entering the professions and is competing side by side with men in business. Much has been gained, but there remains much to be desired. One thing especially, beside which the possession of the ballot sinks into insignificance: From time immemorial man has arrogated to himself the sole privilege of choosing a life companion. This is manifestly wrong. Why should not woman have the same liberty to choose her husband, the father of her children? Why should she not select her life companion from out of all men, and endeavor to win him by the same means employed by him—by proposing marriage to her heart's choice? Until woman has thrown off all restrictions imposed on her by custom and tradition, as well as by law and tyranny, she cannot be said to be completely emancipated."

Clara sat down very demurely. A deep silence had fallen upon the room. Myrtle's face expressed both distress and uneasiness as she glanced at her companions. They were for the most part smiling in secret glee, which threatened every moment to burst forth in riotous laughter. Their bright eyes were all turned on Myrtle. Had Myrtle smiled ever so faintly they would have broken all restraint but Myrtle did not smile, though she felt relieved at the manner in which Clara's bold proclamation was received.

In the earlier days she had, merely by way of instruction, fallen into a way of commenting upon the matter under immediate discussion, and this had now become a thing of course. All eyes were bent expectantly upon her—Clara's among the number.

"I think Clara," said she gravely, "that your ideas are a bit too iconoclastic for the rest of us. Woman has now and ever has had the right to select her life companion from out of all men, and, having found the one to her liking, she may in all modesty show her preference to the man of her choice. It is man's prerogative to seek; ours the happiness of being sought. I fail to see—pardon me, Clara—how we can better our condition by robbing him of his inherent right. If a woman fails to please, to attract the man of her choice, I am very sure that she cannot win him by boldly assuming masculine tactics, and—and—proposing to him."

She concluded with a little burst of laughter in which the others joined right merrily. Clara's most admirable trait of character was her amiable good nature. She did not join in the laughter, but she nodded brightly at Myrtle to show that while she continued in the same opinion, she did not take her friend's criticism amiss.

"You see, Clara," continued Myrtle; "whatever you may think this is not a mere conventional question at all. It is Nature's own arrangement. Even from a conventional standpoint there is much to be said against it. Man is the bread winner and when he proposes marriage to a woman, he in a manner sues for the privilege of supporting her through life. In the same sense a woman proposing marriage to a man would in effect be asking him to support her all her life, and this, I imagine would be most humiliating to a woman of proper pride. And these conditions can never change. Marriage means the formation of a home; the wife's place is in that home, while its maintenance depends upon the man. Let man retain his prerogative, then. We had better make him kneel to us than go on our knees to him. He's vain enough now Heaven knows."

"I'm going to propose to the first man I meet," cried Fanny gayly.

"Very well;" said Myrtle smiling, "in the meantime it's your turn Fanny."

"Oh, Myrtle," cried Fanny blushing, "you must really excuse me this time. I prepared my paper but I forgot to bring it with me."

This was considered very funny by Fanny's companions, who burst into a shriek of laughter, but Myrtle looked quite anxious. It was most important that Fanny should make her long promised address, as Myrtle hoped that her example would awaken a spirit of emulation among the others, or at least serve to encourage the more timid to take an active part in the work.

"Please be good, girls," said Myrtle beseechingly. "Can you not remember what you had to say Fanny?"

"Yes, but I can't speak it as well as if I had the paper here," said Fanny.

"Do as well as you can then, dear," said Myrtle coaxingly, "but don't disappoint us."

Fanny could not help giggling a little at first on encountering the many rougish eyes around her, but soon overcame this tendency and became quite grave. She was small in stature was Fanny and exceedingly pretty, with round rosy cheeks and bright dancing eyes—a pronounced brunette, with a mind of bright intelligence, though its energies were now devoted chiefly to mischief-making.

"I wished to say that we girls are treated unfairly," began Fanny, "that is compared to our brothers. We have the worst of it in every way. I've got a twin brother—George, whom I love dearly. He's a darling. When we were children I used to envy him his independence. Mama loved me as much as she did George, but she treated us differently, and that difference constitutes my sole charge against the sterner sex. In the morning I had to get up two hours earlier than George. I had to help Mama get breakfast while George lay sweetly sleeping. He remained in bed until long after we—Mama and Papa and I—had breakfasted, because Mama thought the dear boy needed sleep so much. He was not called until half an hour before school opened, which gave him just time to eat his breakfast and be off. "Now was that fair?" said Fanny pausing and looking around at them all pouting.

A chorus of negatives answered her. They were all smiling and looking at Fanny in eager anticipation.

"I was obliged not only to tidy up my own room, but George's too, while George was out playing," continued the droll little rogue. "I didn't like it a bit, but I had to do it because 'such work wasn't for boys,' as Mama used to say. I need hardly say that George agreed heartily with Mama, and looked down upon me with scorn because I was not a lordly boy like himself. He always patronized me; he does to this day because I am 'only a girl.' I had to be very careful of my dresses. I was expected to be neat and clean and tidy at all times. If I tore my frock, I was not only soundly scolded by Mama, but I was obliged to sit down during playing hours and mend it. I was supposed to have a place for everything and have everything at all times in its place.

Now, George could tear his clothes all to pieces in a fight, and Mama would laugh at his account of it, and Papa would encourage him to renewed efforts. He could come in as dirty as a little pig, and throw his hat and coat any old place, and nothing was said to him. Mama would wash his face and hands and pick up his things and place them in proper places, ready to his hand. She sewed buttons on his shirts, patched his trousers, brushed his hats and blacked his boots with the greatest possible patience, and George accepted all these attentions like a boy receiving no more nor less than his due. He was highly indignant if everything wasn't just so. Now, was that fair?" asked Fanny again.

"No! No!"

Myrtle could hardly contain herself. Fanny's plaintive tone and pouting expression and laughing eyes were irresistible.

"I would not have you think that Mama loves George more than she does me," continued Fanny. "She does not; only somehow this sort of treatment seems to be the proper thing. The girl is the slave; the boy the lord. Mama expected me to return home instantly after school to assist in the house-work, whereas George could stay out until supper time, and after supper he could go out again and play until bedtime, while I had to stay at home and wash the dishes and prepare the bath for George. I was not permitted to go on the street after dark, because it wasn't proper for girls. Now, was that fair?"

"No! No, Fanny!"

"Well, so it was in everything. George could whisper in church and stare around and laugh. At its worst it was considered but a misdemeanor in him, but if I attempted any of those things it was regarded as a heinous crime. I had to study my lessons at night. George didn't. I had to bear myself with rigid politeness in company, but not so George. I was always stiffly starched; George was free and as careless in his attire as could be. Nevertheless, he got three suits of clothes to my one dress. George went to college. I stayed at home. George is now working in the bank, making ever so much money, which is all his own,

while I am still at home doing the same old things I've been doing since I was a child. George goes with lots of pretty girls, while I must stay at home and wait until some lord of creation deigns to notice me, and even then," added Fanny, glancing slyly at Clara, "I am not permitted to propose to him if I like him."

A shriek of laughter interrupted Fanny. Her doleful tone and tragic expression were inimitable.

"When I was sick Mama nursed me tenderly and sat up nights with me, but I had to be very sick indeed before I received these attentions—a mere headache was nothing. A high fever at least it had to be before a doctor was to be thought of. But if George's little finger ached the whole house was in an uproar. Doctors were sent for in all haste, and George was put to bed and kept home from school, and fed on the daintiest of dishes for weeks at a time, and we went about on tip-toe and talked in whispers lest we agitate his high mightiness. I am bound to say that George did not like all this fuss, but it was made for him and not for me. Now, was that fair?"

The question was put in such a droll, round-eyed, pouting way that it was the funniest part of the whole.

"And so it was in everything, and so I believe it is in most homes. Our mothers train us up to submit to our brothers, to look up to them as to beings made of superior clay, and no matter how spirited we may naturally be, we come to submit, and—and—we like it. Do we not? I believe I do. George is a dear, good, sensible boy in spite of all this, but does it not naturally follow that being used to this adulation all his life he will always expect it? Will he not expect his wife to attend upon him, to look up to him as his mother and sister have always done? And do you think that at this late day I would think of claiming superiority over a—a man who stood even closer to me than does George? I submit to George—willingly, mind you,—loving him all the more because he commands me, and I just *know* it will be the same with—with—well, with *him*."

She sat down amid general applause. Mrs. Marblemore came forward and kissed the little girl's blushing cheeks. She was greatly pleased with the good sense dis-

played by Fanny. Myrtle had become very thoughtful towards the last, and now sat for a moment gravely regarding the shrewd little speaker.

"A vote of thanks ought to be tendered Fanny," she said," for she has to my mind shown us the fundamental cause of the existing standards of the sexes. What is persistently impressed on us in childhood remains with us always. I do not say that this submission of the wife within the home is to be deplored, but inasmuch as its influence extends beyond the home, it emphatically is. The father and husband as the guardian and provider should undoubtedly be the head of the household, but beyond its confines, in matters of public interest, the wife and mother should have an equal say. Fanny's comparison might be carried much further. How much more is expected of a young woman than of a young man. Of a wife than of a husband? Of a mother than of a father? How leniently the world judges the frailties of John, and how heartily it condemns the same in Jane! A man may fall, but there is always a hope of reclaiming him, because all the world is willing to give him a chance; but let a woman take one downward step and she is forever lost."

Mary heard no more—"Let a woman take one downward step and she is forever lost!" The girl's words seemed to sear themselves into her brain; she rose, clutching the chair for support, until a certain black curtain unrolled itself before her eyes; then, with an inarticulate sound, no doubt meant for a word of excuse, she abruptly left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF A WOMAN THAT FINDS HERSELF.

Mary hurried homeward with her brain on fire. The words of the girl in the room yonder kept ringing in her ears like the knell of doom. "One step downward and a woman is forever lost!" Was it even so? Aye, so it was. Tried, judged, condemned beforehand by an inexorable world, such a woman could but sink deeper and deeper into the mire. There was no hope for her. There could be none. She was lost, irredeemably lost; dead to society; dead to all ennobling emotions—a creature without sex, soulless, dirty, despised and despairing. Realizing this to the full, Mary was seized with a strange spirit of recklessness. Her self-tortured mind condemned her as already lost. Why should *she* pretend virtue in the eyes of the world—she who was immoral? How dared *she* pose as pure, when purity had long since vanished from her life and thoughts? Should she go to The Man who awaited her? She saw no joy in it; she would simply be fulfilling her destiny. Should she go?

Mary hurried home the faster, pondering this momentous question.

"It is as Aunt Sadie says," she murmured, nearly choking as she mounted the steps leading up the magnificent entrance to the mansion. "I have lived in immorality so long that all shame has left me. My moral sense is blunted. Virtue is lost. I am an outcast. Then why struggle longer?"

Why, indeed? She could sink no lower in her own eyes at least. A servant brought her a note; it was from her husband. She opened it with a wildly beating heart.

"I am called out of town for a few days," it read, "on important business. Will return by Sunday."

Mary sat for a long time staring at the paper. It was fate. Surely it was fate! Her husband did not leave

home twice in a twelvemonth, but at the very moment when his presence might have acted as a restraint upon her he was gone. Yes, it was fate. Why resist that which was to be? She went upstairs to her chamber, and, sending the maid away, she began opening drawers and looking through papers, apparently without aim or object. She looked at her watch. It was five o'clock. She sat down beside an open window to think. At such critical moments in life all the past rises clearly before the mind. Mary saw, and could have traced, the steps leading downward from pure girlhood to her present degraded state. She was a morally weak woman; all her life she had yielded to the temptation of the moment.

She saw herself a young girl in a small Ohio town, wooed by a man of twice her years. She did not care for him as a woman should care for the man she marries, but she was a poor girl, and she longed for riches and the luxuries that riches bring—a fine house, costly jewels, beautiful gowns and a limitless purse. These her elderly wooer could give her, and stilling her womanly qualms she yielded to her baser desires and married him. That was the first downward step.

She esteemed her husband, and in time his great kindness and love won from her a deep affection. Her baby came, bringing complete happiness into her life, but almost with its birth she lost her husband. The fortune left by him was claimed by earlier sons and daughters, and meekly yielding to their claims she stepped out of her luxurious home and returned to the house of her widowed father, happy in the possession of her child. For three years she dwelt there happily enough, and then she met the country doctor, Richard Watterson, cousin of Winfield, and Sherman's father, who, carrying her heart by storm, married the pretty widow out of hand and took her to live with him and his little boy, whom she came to regard with aversion because he superseded her own passionately loved child in her husband's heart.

Then followed two years of happiness, marred only by the presence of her stepson, and again she was widowed. Her father having passed away in the meantime, she was

left to face the world alone with her son and the brat she hated. The cordial invitation extended to her by her husband's relatives decided her on coming to Clarenceburg, and with the decision the powerful temptation flashed upon her to leave behind the hated boy. Again she yielded. Leaving the child in the care of a maternal uncle, who seemed to have conceived a strong attachment for him, she came west with her son. Such in brief was Mary's earlier history.

Coming to the Watterson's, she saw in Winfield the exact counterpart of the husband she had loved, only graver, manlier and more majestic. She fell in love with him at sight, or rather her love for her dead husband burst forth afresh and wrapped itself about this man who was so marvelously like him. She did everything that a modest woman can do to show her love, to win his in return. By a thousand little tokens she expressed to him her tender regard; by a thousand womanly wiles she sought to awaken in him a responsive tenderness; but his manner to her, always gentle and courteous, never varied. Suitors came in numbers, wooing the lovely widow, but she repulsed them all. They went away discouraged—all but one, who persevered in the face of open scorn.

"When you are married," he would say, smiling, "then, but not until then, will I give up hope."

She admired this tenacity, but would not yield to it. For three long years Mr. Marblemore persevered in his suit without receiving the slightest encouragement. For three long years Mary hid beneath an outward calm a raging volcano of passion and desire. And again she yielded to the promptings of passion, and, throwing herself at the feet of the man she worshiped, she poured out her love and prayed for love in return. Even now, with the damp, cold touch of approaching degradation upon her, her cheeks burned hot with blushes as she recalled that mad scene. His keen distress, his agony of mind pained her in the recollection. He told her the story of his love dead and gone, and in that sorrowful countenance she read the utter hopelessness of her pleading. He could never love woman more. He made it plain to her that he would marry her if she desired, but even then he would go on loving the wife

of his youth. Under such circumstances her life with him would be a mockery. Rather than hold second place in the heart of the man she worshiped, she would give herself to the man she scorned, but who loved her.

She wept tears of shame and anguish that night, but the next day she promised her hand to her persevering suitor. And she married him in spite of her dull, aching heart, in spite of Winfield's grave looks, in spite of her scorn and loathing of self. She married him and lived with him in loveless union, nursing in secret her passion through all the years of her married life. In reality her love for Winfield had long since vanished, though only of late, since the advent of The Man had she come to realize this truth. That which she so long had worshiped in secret was not Winfield, but a distorted image of herself, born of her brooding thoughts dwelling constantly upon the wrong which fate had practiced upon her. The sight of Winfield no longer stirred in her that painful yet exquisite emotion which his image had called up in bygone years. Her heart had long been void when The Man came into her life, filling her mind with unchaste thoughts; her heart with impure desires.

Void it was because she had taught herself to regard her husband with aversion. She had schooled herself to regard him through those baser traits which he in common with all men possessed; and in this contemplation, which awakened all her scorn and abhorrence, she lost sight of the banker's many great and noble qualities. And so, steeling her heart against him, his great love begot no love in return. His unceasing kindness to herself and son had made easier of endurance her life with him, but that was all.

And now she stood upon the brink of the chasm towards which all her life she had been tending. Her legalized immorality, extending over many years, had stamped out all womanly delicacy and shame. The habit of weakly yielding to ignoble impulse in smaller things had inevitably prepared her for the final plunge. The Man was now awaiting her—The Man who, recognizing a kindred spirit, had boldly raised his eyes to hers. She would go to him; she loved him, or what was this mad desire

impelling her to him? Yes, she loved him—and yet—and yet—she glanced down at the hand which he had kissed, and her mouth drooped with a strange repugnance, and an involuntary shudder ran through her body. She started up suddenly and, going to a small stand in a corner, she washed that hand again, as she had washed it many times since that occurrence, under the strange impression that it was soiled, although it looked beautifully white and sweet.

Mary was in reality an innocent woman. Her mind was so pure that it shrank by instinct from that which was impure; but she did not know herself. She had a distorted image of herself, born of constant brooding on her hapless state, which filled her with scorn and loathing. In a spirit of madness, born of fierce rebellion against conspiring fate, she had given herself into the keeping of a man she did not love; had lived with him in closest intimacy while loving another man, and realizing with all the horror of a pure and sensitive nature the immorality of her life, she had come to believe herself corrupt to the core. In this spirit The Man had found her. Fascinated by a personality so sparkling and vivacious, so widely different from her own, charmed by an audacity such as she had never encountered, she had allowed her thoughts to dwell upon him to her own undoing. She did not shrink away on discovering his designs. Why should she? Was she not base? Was she not innately immoral? The Man would never have dared to raise his eyes to her had he not recognized in her a kindred spirit. It was fate, the fate toward which she had all her life been tending. She could not escape it she firmly believed. And yet she had resisted fiercely, but to what avail? After two days and nights of desperate conflict, in which she had called in every possible auxiliary to her aid, here she was weakly yielding again.

A clock struck in an inner room. Six o'clock! Hastily adjusting a heavy veil to her hat, she drew on her gloves with trembling fingers. The last train passed through the city at six-twenty, she knew, for had not *he* so instructed her? She hastened down-stairs, and without pause made for the outer door. With her hand on the handle, she hesitated as if struck by a sudden thought. Turning around

slowly she retraced her steps, going not to her chamber now, but to her husband's room adjoining. Pausing upon the threshold she gazed around with a strange expression in her eyes. How bleak it looked! How bare of elegance and luxury! The banker despised the gewgaws which he provided so lavishly for his loved ones. Mary went into the room and with a gentle touch placed various trifling things aright. Upon a stand she beheld a picture of herself, a photograph taken years before. A wave of color swept through her cheeks. She caught it up with a sound very like a sob and laid it face downward upon the table.

One last look she cast around. The curtains which screened the bed were looped back, revealing the huge pillows and snow-white coverlet. She advanced a step, and with outstretched hand she touched the pillow, then turned and fled from the room and from the house.

Many people were on the street. She passed them by without a glance. She turned into the square, all alive now with the bustle that marked the end of the working day, and without a glance to the right or left continued on around, following from force of habit the course that led past her husband's bank. She cast a furtive glance at the bank in passing, and paused with an exclamation of surprise at once and pleasure.

Standing upon the broad threshold she beheld a youth well known to her as a relative of her husband's first wife, an awkward, freckled-faced boy of sixteen, fresh from the farm. He wore a new suit of clothes, a new hat and new shoes, and wore them with an air of mingled shame and pride. He stood beaming out upon the world in a state of bashful bliss impossible to describe. At sight of Mary he started and, blushing to the ears, he advanced a step or two, holding out his hand. Mary loved this brave boy, whom she knew to be the sole support of an aged mother and three or four small brothers and sisters.

"Why, Harold!" she cried, raising her veil the better to note his handsome appearance. "How nice you look. My! My!"

"Cousin Andrew bought them," cried the bashful youngster, blushing and nearly crying in mingled shame

and pride and joy. "I stopped in to see him, being here, 'cause mother always wants me to, and he insisted on it so, and won't mother be pleased and proud? He bought a dress for mother, too, and a suit of clothes for Jackson and two dresses apiece for Lottie and Flora and a big doll for each; and, see, he got me a watch—gold it is—and shoes and hats, and, oh, everything—a big wagon-load! Ain't he a jolly brick? He laughed and laughed all the time, and I didn't dare say no to anything, 'cause whenever I dared to open my mouth he started in all over again and bought and bought, until I didn't know what to do. A jolly brick, I call him!"

All of which Harold poured out in a breath, glowing in a rapture of mingled gratitude and admiration, in which, too, was blended some slight feeling of shame that he should have allowed his generous cousin to prevail upon him to accept this profusion.

Mary stood regarding the boy with an expression so strange that Harold paused; but perceiving presently that she was smiling faintly down at him, he continued in more subdued tones:

"He asked me to come around again, so that he could see me in my new clothes," he said, "and now he's gone, and the bank's closed."

"He was called away very suddenly, Harold," replied Mary with trembling lips. "I'm afraid he forgot about you in his hurry."

"Oh!"

"But you must come up to the house, my dear," continued Mary kindly.

"I can't this time, Cousin Mary," replied Harold; "but next time I will. Sure! I've got to go home now, and it's a fifteen-mile drive, you know. And, oh, just think! Cousin Andrew is going to help me pay my way through college. I'm going to be a preacher, you know—a minister, I mean. Won't mother be proud?"

"I'm very glad, Harold," said Mary hurriedly, "but I can't stay now. Remember me to your mother. Good-bye."

She hurried onward, agitated by conflicting emotions. It was altogether curious that all this time Mary had

thought of her husband only in the abstract, as a figure to be pushed aside for The Man. Of her son, of those other victims, The Man's wife and children, of her friends and neighbors, she thought not at all. The one thought of The Man awaiting her and of the terrible fate that impelled her irresistibly towards him, was so overpowering, that it drove out all surrounding objects. But the sight of this boy, so happy and grateful, his artless story of her husband's goodness and generosity, arrested for a moment that one dominant idea and turned her thoughts fully upon him. How good he was, how uniformly kind and generous! How loving to her always! How openhanded to all! And was this to be her return? She asked herself this question with deepening horror and self-loathing.

In imagination she saw her husband alone and desolate, disgraced and deserted by her whom he had loved so dearly. As this appalling picture flashed across her mind she felt a shock as of awakening remorse and pity. A great wave of tenderness for him, her husband, swept over her. She paused irresolutely—then slowly went on. She turned off the corner, her pace quickening. She was thinking not of The Man now; but of her husband.

Seeing him in the light in which her imagination now pictured him, she for the first time saw him as he really was. The external man had never been repellant to her; in his thick burliness he reminded her much of her father. It was the inner man that she had loathed—that greedy, grasping, arrogant spirit that animated him, coloring his every action. And yet—was he greedy and grasping? Was he not on the contrary the most generous of men? Did he not give with open hand to church and charity? It was not greed of gold that animated him, but love of power. And was not this a proper, even a noble, sentiment? All men love power, and women love men of power and admire them extravagantly. As for his arrogance and pride—had not he the right to be proud of the wealth and power which he had gained by the might of his own mind? All this flashed upon Mary in a single moment's time, and in that moment her husband was transformed in her eyes. He was a great man and growing greater every day. He was

a good man, a man of pure life. He was a just man, in every way worthy of the regard, the love, of a good woman. And she was his wife; he was her husband!

"And I—and I!" Mary paused suddenly, chilled to the heart by the thought of her unworthiness. For one moment she stood quite still. People passing and repassing on the street, hurrying homeward from the day's work, saw only a woman plunged in the depths of irresolution. Nothing more. But she—she stood shrinking on the brink of a dreadful abyss, striving desperately to withdraw, yet more than half convinced that it was too late. Could she turn back now? Could she begin life once more, pure and undefiled? "One step downward and a woman is forever lost." But she had not taken that fatal step! Thank God! Thank God! A feeling of devout gratitude swelled Mary's heart almost to bursting.

"It is a miracle," she murmured, walking on once more, so deeply absorbed in thought that she was wholly unconscious of her movements.

What mad idiocy to mistake so long the meaning of her doubting heart! Until The Man had come into her life she had fancied herself in love with Winfield. That feeling had dominated her every thought for so long that it had become a habit, blinding her to all else, so that long after it had ceased to disturb her she had continued, unconscious of any change, until the tempter came, proving by the fascination which he exercised over her that she had long since been weaned from Winfield. And yet she did not love The Man! All that was best in her nature cried out against him. She thought of her husband, and a strange sensation of happiness came stealing over her, sweet at once and painful, gripping her heart like bands of burning steel. A certain glowing gladness she felt, a certain shame and pride, an all-pervading tenderness, so deep, so vivid, so wondrous in its sweeping sway that Mary thrilled and thrilled to the very center of her being. Strangely familiar that emotion seemed, spite of its astounding newness familiar and dear, as if for long years it had dwelt all unknown within her bosom. A thousand little things came flashing across her mind to bear out the thought. She recalled moments of

tenderness now which at the time she had mistaken for pity; loving ministrations, which she had thought inspired purely by remorse. She remembered hours of tranquil happiness in his society, and with growing wonder marvelled that she should have continued blind so long.

She felt a quaking at her heart now at the thought of facing her husband, of meeting those honest eyes which regarded her so tenderly. How cold she had been to him! How indifferent to the great love which he lavished upon her! She glowed with pride and tenderness now, thinking of that love. Ah! how different their future life should be!

The train was coming in; she heard its rush and rumble; she saw it a hundred yards away dashing across the street. It came to a standstill at the station. She hurried, almost running onward, animated by a different purpose now. Other people were hurrying in the same direction. Men were loitering on the long platform. Women, too, were there, and children, gazing curiously at the huge coaches. She knew them all and she was known to all. She was heavily veiled, but her incomparable form and grace of movement were sufficient to betray her identity; and, as if to emphasize her presence there, as if glorying in the fact, she threw back her veil, disclosing her features to the general gaze. Her cheeks were red; her eyes shone with excitement and triumph; her bosom rose and fell in stormy emotion. She passed in feverish haste the various groups of loiterers, and, reaching the door of the station house, she turned around and gazed at the long train, and her glance was a glance of triumphant defiance!

"Train starts in five minutes!"

She heard the shout, but did not stir. Motionless she stood just where she had stationed herself, gazing at the train, enjoying with an almost childish glee her victory. She was, as it were, testing her strength of mind and purpose; she believed herself yet mysteriously drawn to The Man, for the time had been too brief and her heart too full of conflicting emotions to admit of other than mere instinctive action. Her mind as yet was in too confused and chaotic a state to give her a clear conception of her true feelings. She felt deeply ashamed and remorseful, yet glori-

ously happy as she stood there tingling from head to foot, as if new blood had in some mysterious manner been infused into her veins.

The bustle and clamor were prodigious. Men in uniform were running in all directions. Travelers were clambering into the coaches, the voice of the conductor admonishing them to greater exertions. Vans, busses, carriages and vehicles of all kinds were driving up, and the hoarse voices of their drivers recommending their various hostelries mingled with the sound of escaping steam and clanging bells and rumbling trucks. The bell rang out more sharply and slowly, the train started—the train that had been about to bear her to destruction. She stood watching it as it gathered speed. She followed it with her eyes as it went dashing onward out of sight. It was gone, and she was saved. She turned away with a prayer of thankfulness upon her lips, a bubbling spring of new-found happiness in her heart. She had found herself.

"Were you expecting someone?" asked a voice almost in her ear.

She turned, startled, to be confronted by Mrs. Rosewood's smiling face.

"No," she said quietly.

"I didn't know. You have been standing here quite a while. Are you going home?"

"Yes," said Mary, smiling very brightly. "I'm going home."

They walked towards the square side by side.

"Did you know that Mrs. Ringrose was down sick?" asked Mrs. Rosewood after a moment of silence.

"No," said Mary, glancing quickly at the smiling little woman.

"Yes. Another baby. Aunt Sadie was there all the afternoon. Mr. Ringrose is away, too! What a pity! When does he return?"

"I don't know. How should I know?" said Mary, quite angrily.

"I thought you might," replied Mrs. Rosewood, coolly. "Good-bye."

She stood for a moment at the foot of the lawn, gazing after the banker's lady, with a sneer of scorn.

When Mary reached the mansion she learned to her surprise that Mr. Marblemore was at home. He was in his room in the tower, busied with his mechanical experiments. She went upstairs, wondering very much what had caused the change in his plans. A half hour later, dressed in a pretty wrapper, she went into that little room in which her husband spent all his leisure hours, puzzling over intricate mechanical problems. Mary was a rare visitor there. She gazed around curiously at the bits of queer machinery, the crucibles, tools, oddly constructed contrivances of all kinds, which gave Mr. Marblemore such keen pleasure. He sat with his back to the door at a narrow bench, bending over a bit of mechanism, so deeply abstracted that he failed to hear her entrance or approach. She stood behind him for some moments, looking down at him, and her glance was very tender. She was deeply, deeply ashamed and repentant. She longed, seeing him sitting there, the living embodiment of truth and trust and love and honor—she longed to throw herself at his feet and pour out her shameful and humiliating confession, and beg his forgiveness. She longed to do this, but she was not so foolish. Instead, she came up behind and, placing her arm upon his broad shoulder, startled him out of his abstraction.

"Why, Mary!" he said looking up and smiling.

"You did not go away, Andrew, after all?" she said, still remaining with her arm resting upon his shoulder.

"No, Mary; I was urgently wanted at Peoria on a matter of business, but at the last moment I received word by wire that it was carried through without me."

"I am glad."

"Are you, Mary? Really glad?"

"Yes, Andrew. What is that machine for, Andrew?"

Greatly delighted with the interest she showed, he explained it to her at length.

"It is only by way of improvement, you know," he said, smiling, "not an original invention. In fact, my dear, I am utterly incapable of conceiving anything; but give me a bit of mechanism, with a definite idea of what it is—its

uses and purposes, you understand—and I can study out a thousand improvements. Rather curious, Mary, the run of men's minds," he continued musingly. "In business, for example, I can conceive the most gigantic and far-reaching schemes, plan them down to the furthermost detail, and place them upon a sure foundation; while Davidson, who never had, and never will have, an original thought, can carry out the greatest with the most admirable ease and finish. It is all in the quality of mind, my dear. Standing alone, Davidson would fail, as he has failed repeatedly, but working under my direction, executing my schemes, he never fails. It follows, therefore, that my mind is of a higher order than is Davidson's. Yet here in the realm of invention, I take Davidson's place; the mind of the man who can think along original lines, who can conceive, in short, is as much above mine, as mine is above my assistant in business. And so, going higher still into the realms of art, one could, by a process of reasoning, arrive at what is, or was, the very greatest mind in the world. All of which is beside the mark, I know," he ended laughing.

"You never take any rest, Andrew," said Mary. "You must not work so hard."

"This is not work, Mary. It is my one great pleasure, as you, Mary," he added, kissing her hand, "are my one great happiness."

To his great astonishment she burst into a passion of tears at this, and with her head resting on his shoulder she cried and sobbed like a child.

"Why, Mary!" he cried all aghast.

"Let us go away, Andrew," she said, looking implor-ingly at him through her tears.

"I can not get away, my dear," he replied. "But why not go alone, or with the children, Mary? Go where you like and enjoy yourself, and return to me when you are tired."

"I will not go without you, Andrew, but I do wish you could so arrange your business as to give you a holiday now and then, like other men."

The banker shook his head, smiling. He could have done as other men did by confining his business to the limits

bounding theirs, but his ambition was too boundless, his mental energy too great to admit of that. But Mary's tender solicitude filled him with the deepest joy and gratitude.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH THE GENERAL ENTERTAINS.

It was Sunday, and guests were expected at General Hamilton's. Mam Sue was in her glory as she waddled about the little kitchen preparing dinner. Her fat, shining face was wrinkled into a thousand folds, and every fold a smile. Benjamin sat near by, softly strumming on a banjo and singing to himself, with a far-away look in his sleepy eyes. Every now and then he would twang the strings loudly and burst into a long-drawn wailing note, which gradually died away in his throat, and all that told of the continuation of the song was the negro's moving lips. It sounded very weird and plaintive, that long-drawn wail, echoing in that snug back kitchen, far removed from the singer's native clime. Mam Sue paused at every recurrence of the outburst and, with spoon or ladle suspended, turned her head in a listening attitude, not towards, but away from Benjamin, as though harkening to a sound from far away. At such times the smiles died out of her glistening face, which became sad in expression, and when Benjamin's deep voice rose weirder than usual, she stamped her feet and waved her arms, and with body swaying and head bobbing she accompanied in sympathetic motion the wordless song for minutes afterward.

"No mo,' Benjy, no mo'," she said at last in a beseeching tone. "I decla' it makes me mos' 'stracted."

Benjy ceased, and, carefully placing the instrument in a corner, he slowly filled a short clay pipe and still with that far-away look in his sleepy eyes, sat silently smoking and dreaming.

"Wha' dat Dan'l," said Mam Sue, going to the door. "Oh, Dan'l!"

"Oh, Mama!" replied Daniel, laughing as he came around the corner.

Mam Sue, who had been frowning prodigiously, broke into a hundred smiles at sight of her son.

"Stay he'ah, Dan'l," she said. "Yo' got to he'p Mammy. Massa Dave's gwine to hab company."

"All right, Mammy," said Daniel, throwing himself down beside his father and leaning back against him with a composure that charmed his mother.

"Look at dat now!" she exclaimed admiringly as Benjamin placed his arm around the boy and drew him closer. "Dat dar' boy am gittin' mo' like the white folk eve'y day. I decla' he am."

"Oh, I wish I was in Va'ginee," said Daniel, sighing.

"Ah! child, so we all does," said Benjamin.

"Yo' wish yo' 'es in Va'ginee," cried Mam Sue laughing. "Gowan away, chile. What yo' know about Va' ginee? Yo'se bawn he'ah. Yah! Yah! Yah! Oh, Lawd Gawd! Yah! Yah! Yah!"

She stood before them, her fat arms akimbo, shaking with laughter.

"Pap tells me about Va'ginee," said Daniel. "Don't yo', Pap?"

Pap nodded, and Mam Sue, still laughing, went about her work. Having finished the pipe, Benjamin knocked the ashes out and rose to prepare for his coming duties. Daniel coaxed Carlo into the kitchen, and together they lay down in a corner on terms of perfect equality. Mam Sue went in to see the General, after first smoothing her dress and properly adjusting the knots in the red bandana 'kerchief which invariably covered her gray-grown wool. The General sat in an arm-chair on the verandah, for the weather still was mild and balmy. Mam Sue stood in the doorway for a while, gazing down at her master with pride and affection. He looked a very handsome and courtly old gentleman, sitting there, thoughtfully tugging at his shaggy mustache with his one small white hand.

"Is Missy Rosie comin', too, Massa Dave?" asked Mam Sue, after a preparatory cough or two.

"Yes," replied the General, smiling kindly upon his old servant. "Yes, little Dimples is coming, Mam Sue."

"Ah'se glad. An' Aunt Sadie?"

"Yes, and the Majah and Miss Myrtle and Mastah Sherman. Mrs. Rosewood, too, pu'haps, though I ha'dly think so."

"Lawd, Gawd, Mas' Dave!" cried Mam Sue, throwing up both her hands in horror. "Wha' fo' yo' want to 'vite all dem folks? I cla' to goodness, Mas' Dave, Ah'se got nothin' fo' dey all to eat."

"Come, come, Mam Sue," said the General, smiling, "I know better than that."

"Cla' to goodness, Mas' Dave, Ah ain't," said Mam Sue, shaking with laughter as she went waddling back to her kitchen.

A moment later a carriage drove up to the gate, and the General advanced with bared head to receive his guests.

"Welcome, Mistress Sadie," he said, bowing over that smiling lady's hand. "Welcome, Majah. Miss Myrtle, I am deeply honohed. Boy yo' hand. We shall be a small family pa'ty," continued the General cordially as he led the way into the house. "I expect but one or two othehs. Little Dimples is yet to come—see here she is."

She came in rosy and panting, having walked all the way from church. She looked as neat and sweet and modest as usual as she went up to the General.

"Mama can't come, General," she said softly; "she isn't feeling very well."

Then she advanced shyly to offer her hand to Mr. Watterson, whose majestic stateliness and grave face always awed the little maid.

"My gracious! child," said Aunt Sadie. "Why didn't you tell us you were coming? We could have brought you in the carriage."

"I like walking, Aunt Sadie," said Rosie, seeking to escape all further notice by hiding behind Myrtle.

"I haven't had my kiss yet, Rosie," said Sherman, approaching.

"For shame, Sherman," said Rosie, laughing. "Aren't you jealous, Myrtle?"

"No," said Myrtle, shaking her head with amazing vehemence, "not the least little bit in the world."

She drew Rosie down beside her, and Sherman went to

join his uncle, who, with Aunt Sadie and the General, had retired into a neighboring window, where they stood chatting.

"Isn't somebody going to be married soon?" asked Myrtle, smiling.

"No, Myrtle," said Rosie, blushing; "that is, I don't know."

"I hope so. A certain young man is very devoted to somebody."

She wondered at Rosie's distressed little face, but thought it only the natural uneasiness caused by hope deferred.

"He will speak soon, Rosie," she said soothingly. "He cannot resist my sweet little friend."

Rosie beamed more brightly then and said: "But when will you be married, Myrtle?"

"Oh, not for years and years yet," replied Myrtle, shaking her head with much determination.

"Oh, but Sherman will not wait," said Rosie sagely. "Look, he can't keep his eyes off of you for a single minute. Do look, Myrtle."

But Myrtle would not look. She laughed and bent down her head to hide the rosy color that mounted to her cheeks.

"See, you will not look at him, so he is coming," said Rosie.

Sherman, impatient and unhappy away from his sweetheart's side, did indeed come up at that moment, and Rosie with a kind little glance rose in spite of Myrtle's detaining grasp, saying that she must speak to Mam Sue. Sherman promptly took possession of the seat she vacated and without a moment's loss of time fell a wooing his sweetheart. Myrtle shook her head, frowned, laughed, placed her hands over her ears, and said "For shame, Sherman," quite sternly, but she could not stay the ardent youth's glowing words of love and passionate endearment, nor did she try for long, so sweet was the voice and caressing and tender, that she inclined her head more and more to catch its faintest note, and before long, oblivious to all the world around them, they were sitting with hands clasped and heads

close together. Aunt Sadie, observing their tender attitude, plucked her brother by the sleeve and with her eyes directed the General's attention to the loving pair. The delighted lady had to press both hands to her mouth to smother the shriek of glee that involuntarily rose to her lips, and even then she exploded once or twice spasmodically.

Rosie, hurrying into the kitchen, was received with intense delight by Mam Sue.

"Do you love me, Mam Sue?" said Rosie, throwing herself into the black woman's arms.

"Does I lub yo', Honey?" blubbered Mam Sue. "I does, Honey, 'deed I does."

Daniel woke up in his corner, and Carlo, opening his eyes at the same moment, stretched himself sleepily and went stalking with slow, majestic steps into the drawing room.

"I shall never cease admiring the simplicity of everything in your house, General," Aunt Sadie was saying, when Benjamin appeared in immaculate attire.

"Dinnah is ready, suh," he said, bowing to the ground.

The General gave his arm to Aunt Sadie and led the way into the dining-room. Mr. Watterson followed with Myrtle, and Sherman with little Rosie on his arm brought up the rear. They gathered around the snowy board, and at a nod from his master, Benjamin solemnly began his duties by removing the cover of a dish of vast dimensions placed in front of Mr. Watterson.

"Majah," said the General, with a smiling glance at his one hand, "I must call upon you."

Mr. Watterson took up the carving knife and fork with the air of a man favored beyond his deserts.

"Isn't this delightful, though?" said Aunt Sadie, beaming around at them all. "I love all my friends dearly, but I do not love one well enough to wish to share with her the General's hospitality this day. I do wish, though, that Mary were here, and Clara, and Mrs. Thompson, and—"

"Hold, Sadie," cried Mr. Watterson. "No more, no more!"

"But it is so nice to have lots of friends around one," said Aunt Sadie, comfortably. "Isn't it now, General?"

The dinner was excellent throughout. Mam Sue had quite outdone herself. Whatever the financial condition of the Chronicle, the General's larder bespoke profusion and plenty. Benjamin, conscious of his son's bright eyes behind the kitchen door, set the lad a noble example in dignity of deportment, in quickness of foot and deftness of hand.

"Mam Sue is a treasure, General," said the Major.

The General, well aware that Mam Sue was listening with all her ears behind the kitchen door, smiled, delighted with the Major's appreciation.

"She is, Majah," he said, "but I neva' tell her so."

"Now that is wrong, General—pardon me," said Aunt Sadie gravely. "A word of praise should be given when it is deserved."

"I'm going to steal Mam Sue some day," cried Sherman gayly.

"Sherman is going to leave us, Majah," said the General. "Chicago is his goal. He is ambitious to become a great jo'nalist."

"This is news, indeed," cried Mr. Watterson, smiling broadly. "How long has that idea been in your mind, Sherman?"

"Oh, I was only thinking about it," said Sherman, looking down to avoid Aunt Sadie's astonished gaze and Myrtle's searching glance. "I was talking to Farraday, and I think there's a field for me there. All one requires is patience, pluck and perseverance."

Myrtle smiled. These were three qualities which the lad above all others lacked. Patience he had of the nobler kind, and force and physical courage a plenty, but the patience and pluck and perseverance required to work slowly and painfully from the bottom rung of the ladder upward were not his. Poor Aunt Sadie, chilled to the heart at the mere thought of losing her boy, patted her hair very hard, looking eagerly across at Sherman. Meeting her anxious eyes and fearful of spoiling her pleasure for the day, he smiled reassuringly and shook his head, and Aunt Sadie, breathing deeply, became exceedingly cheerful once more.

Benjamin had just placed the coffee upon the table and was standing at ease behind his master's chair, when a foot-

step sounded without, crossing the floor of the adjoining room, and the next moment Elmer appeared in the doorway.

"Am I too late?" he cried gayly.

A slight shadow passed across the General's face, but it cleared directly, and, rising, he commanded Benjamin to lay another plate.

"By no means, General," cried Elmer. "I have just dined. Do not put yourself out on my account in the least. I will but beg a cup of that fragrant coffee of Benjamin's."

"Draw up your cha'h, suh," said the General.

"No, no; I'll sit right here; thank you Benjamin."

The General reluctantly resumed his place and tried to start the conversation anew, but the graceless young man's abrupt appearance had somehow cast a restraint over the erstwhile cheerful company. Elmer, however, plunged blithely into the breach and in his own inimitably droll way gradually won them to smiling again, the more so as one and all suspected that his presence there was owing to the blooming little creature sitting so quietly and modestly beside Sherman. She had colored deeply at the sound of his voice, but as no one had looked in her direction her embarrassment gradually abated, and while Elmer was talking she cast little furtive glances at him, glances of the deepest tenderness and admiration.

"I know, General," said Elmer, "that when I explain the cause of my intrusion you will pardon me. Having resolved to spend an hour or two with my best and sweetest friend, I called at her home only to learn to my dismay that she was away for the day. Franklin very kindly informed me where I would find her, and, being one of those fellows who stop at nothing to gain a desired end, I at once determined to take your castle by storm, and here I am, Aunt Sadie's most devoted slave and admirer."

"You are welcome, my lad," said the General again.

Aunt Sadie beamed a bright assent.

They rose presently and went out upon the lawn. A gentle breeze came sweeping in across the vast surrounding prairies; fleecy clouds of gauzy thinness overspread the sky, dimming the brightness of the sun and tempering its rays to a pleasant mildness. The vast lawn was thickly

dotted with trees and clumps of shrubbery, still clothed in velvety green. The General with Aunt Sadie and Sherman went strolling among the trees. Myrtle, with Rosie and Elmer, followed slowly. Mr. Watterson fell behind the others. He walked very slowly, with his hands clasped behind him and his head bent in deep thought. Arriving at a spot comparatively clear, he paused and stood gazing pensively across into the neighboring cemetery. He remained for a long time motionless, looking in the one direction. His expression was sad, his eyes moist with emotion. He felt a pair of little hands clasping his arm, and passing his hand over his brow like one awakening from a sleep, he looked down into the eyes of his daughter.

"Papa," she said, very softly, "Papa!"

There were oceans of love, of tender sympathy and sorrow in the single word. He patted her hand gently and smiled.

"You are very like your mother, my love," he said.

He drew her hand through his arm, and they followed the General and Aunt Sadie.

Elmer had attached himself to Rosie, who was walking by his side with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks.

"I am coming to see you tonight, Rosie," said Elmer softly. "May I?"

"I—I don't know," faltered Rosie.

"Don't know!" echoed Elmer. "Oh, Rosie, you used to be glad to see me!"

"I am now," she cried, pressing hard upon his arm with her little hand; "that is, I would be if—oh, Elmer! You know why," she broke off with a sudden rush of blinding tears.

He drew her behind some screening bushes and softly kissed her.

"What do I know, Rosie?"

"That I can no longer receive you," sobbed Rosie, striving to quell her agitation. "Not as a modest girl, I mean."

"Now, Rosie, don't be a foolish little girl. Didn't you promise to marry me?"

"Yes," breathed Rosie, "but—but—"

"And you can't receive your future husband? Why, Rosie, what do you mean?"

He knew well what she meant, and she knew, having bitter cause to know. She said no more, but gazed up into his eyes adoringly.

"Come, dear, let us follow the others," said Elmer. "Do you not trust me, Rosie?"

"Yes, Elmer," she replied, breathlessly.

"And may I come tonight?"

"I—I'm afraid, Elmer!" replied the girl with a little gasp; but she squeezed his arm very hard with her little hands.

"Afraid of your own Elmer, Rosie?" he said reproachfully. "What can you be afraid of?"

Whatever it was she could not give it tongue. She remained silent, and Elmer whispered as they came up with the others, "I shall come tonight, Rosie, and I shall expect to find you at home."

Having completed the circuit of the yard, the various parties returned to the verandah. Daniel brought out chairs for all, but only the General, Mr. Watterson and Myrtle availed themselves of them. Aunt Sadie, waving a gay farewell over her shoulder, carried her boy off again, having determined to spend half an hour or so with a neighboring lady. Rosie slipped quietly into the kitchen to talk with Mam Sue, and Elmer seated himself on the edge of the verandah with his legs dangling in his usual careless fashion.

"The city is creeping out on you, General," said Mr. Watterson, glancing at the nearest house a hundred yards away.

"Yes," replied the General, frowning. "I thought when I pitched my tent out here that the solitude would last my time, but the town is growing rapidly. It is branching out in all directions quite as freely as in this."

"High time we were having a street railway, then," cried Elmer, pertly.

The General laughed good-humoredly. He had defeated that project for the time at least and could afford to laugh.

"Is it not wonderful to reflect," said Mr. Watterson,

thoughtfully, "that this country, now the home of teeming millions, was comparatively a few years ago a wild waste of wilderness? What marvels civilization has wrought! Where formerly the Indian battled, fished and hunted are now tens of thousands of happy homes."

"And the Indian? Wha'h is he?" asked the General.

"The survival of the fittest, General," said Mr. Watterson, stretching forth his hand in mild enthusiasm. "The white man is the last and the noblest work of God. His destiny is marked out for him and whatever stands in the way of the final goal must be crushed, wiped out, exterminated. The survival of the fittest! It is the law of nature. We are prone to pity the denizens of the wilds, but, General, they must yield their existence to the march of human destiny. Savagery must retreat before civilization. The survival of the fittest! It is the slogan of civilization. With a Columbus to lead the way, the eager stream that follows is irresistible, overwhelming. It cannot—may not—should not be stayed. Its advance necessitates the devastation of all primitive life. It is nature's law."

"It is a ta'hible law, Majah," said the General.

"Terrible, indeed, but inevitable. Evolution is going on every moment of time, but very slowly, measured by our standards. A generation is but a moment in an eternity of time, and as generation succeeds generation the mass of mankind must increase, and, increasing, spread over vast areas in order to maintain life and being. And all things primitive must go down before expanding civilization. It is nature's law, and nature is inexorable."

Myrtle reveled in her father's eloquence, while the General chafed and Elmer yawned. He continued in the same strain contending with the General, who hotly resenting his old friend's dictatorial tone strenuously disputed every inch of the ground they covered. Myrtle siding heart and soul with her father would dearly have liked to join in with a word now and then, but she knew from bitter experience that a word from her would instantly check his eager interest and turn his thoughts into another channel. Mr. Watterson was very proud of his daughter, but he never could bring himself to think of her as other

than a loving child. Elmer tried once or twice to engage her in conversation, but without avail.

"I am duly doing time now in the bank," he said indolently.

"Are you indeed?" responded Myrtle, abstractedly.

"Yes, I'm wearing myself into an early grave."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the girl intent upon her father.

"What!" cried Elmer.

"Hush!" said Myrtle, frowning and absolutely holding up her finger in warning as to a babbling child.

Elmer rose in great indignation and stalked away in search of Rosie.

It was some hours later when Aunt Sadie returned with her boy.

"I know I did wrong, General," she said, "but I have promised so often to call upon Mrs. Dinsmore that I really couldn't tear myself away when I got there. She's such a dear. And, oh, the darling children she has, General! Will you pardon me, General?"

"Yes, Mistress Sadie, on condition that you stay an hour beyond yo' usual time."

"You are very kind," said Aunt Sadie, smiling.

"Myrtle and I will go on ahead, Uncle," said Sherman, along towards dark, "so that you may offer a seat to Rosie and Elmer."

"I was about to suggest that very thing."

So the lovers went away arm in arm, Myrtle with her head pensively drooping and Sherman rattling away in his usual happy, haphazard fashion.

"Are you really thinking of going away, Sherman?" asked Myrtle softly.

"Yes, I am really thinking of it."

"Are you resolved upon it?"

"There is only one thing that will keep me at home," Sherman replied, bending low to look into her eyes.

She did not reply and they continued for some time in silence.

"Only one thing, sweetheart," said Sherman presently. "You know what that is, Myrtle."

"Yes, Sherman, I know," Myrtle replied in a low voice.

He said no more, but looking down to make sure that they were unobserved, he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it many times. She regarded him with deep emotion.

"Be patient, dear Sherman," she murmured, "very patient with me."

They walked on in silence after that and before long gained the old homestead where Franklin received them in stately fashion as became the butler of the first family in Clarenceburg.

"I have never enjoyed a day so much, General," said Aunt Sadie, in parting from her host.

"You must come again then, Madam—very soon."

The blood-red sun was sinking low on the western horizon, when, looking back, Aunt Sadie saw the gallant old warrior turning into his gate.

"He's the dearest man, Winfield," she murmured.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH A VERY OLD STORY IS RETOLD.

The wistful expression on Rosie's face became more pronounced every day. The gay raillery of her companions failed to rouse her. She replied to their chaffing only with a sad little smile. She worked industriously in cleaning and arranging her shelves and setting forth her wares in the most attractive style, spending as much time as possible at it, as if to fill her mind with something other than the thoughts that troubled all her waking hours.

Old Murly, going his slipshod way through the store, would pause to gaze in warm approval at the pretty display, the tidy shelves, and the pretty neat little woman behind the counter.

"Good little Rosie," he would say, rubbing his hands together. "Fine! fine!" Such praise, once sweet to Rosie, pleased her no more. Her heart was no longer in her work, but weighted down by the burden of a secret that filled her with a fearful shame and foreboding terror. Elmer never came to the store now. He had now no need to make appointments with the patient little toiler. She stayed at home waiting for him, and trembling lest he should not come. Yes, it had come to this pass. The once innocent, timid, trusting little Rosie was now his slave and plaything. She could no longer meet the pure gaze of her girl companions, nor visit Aunt Sadie as heretofore, nor associate with Myrtle, who was the soul of purity, nor call upon the General, nor do any of the many things which as an innocent virtuous girl had been her joy and pride.

And how did this come to pass? How had Rosie the once joyous and light-hearted little maid been brought to this abject state? The history of the happy days following upon that fatal night when Elmer had first kissed little Rosie's lips is quickly told. He visited the girl every evening, taking complete possession of her, holding her in close

embrace, and kissing her at will. Without alarming her modesty by a spoken word, he made her understand that she belonged to him, that having promised to marry him, she must submit to his caresses and respond to them, and loving him with passionate adoration, obedience in this became her pride and joy. She did not realize the danger into which she gradually was drifting. He spoke constantly of their coming marriage, and drew her on to speak of it. He indulged in smiling remarks that brought blushes to her cheeks, whereon he would laugh as at something exceedingly droll, and Rosie came to smile and laugh with him, thinking it was only Elmer's way. His freedom of manner sometimes filled her with shame. He laughed at her prudishness, ignored her protests, which became gradually weaker and fewer. Surely he meant no harm! Was she not to become his wife? And so the word, the look, the touch, at first indignantly repudiated, came to be laughed at, then tolerated, then expected. Thus by imperceptible degrees the young girl's modesty was undermined.

It was not until one night late in the autumn that Elmer, calling as usual at a late hour, indulged his passion in a manner so open and flagrant as to leave no room in Rosie's mind for doubt or misunderstanding. He had been drinking until, his senses reeling, he had lost his customary caution and Rosie realized with a shock whither she had been tending. Dumfounded, terribly indignant and ashamed, she left him, and creeping to her room, she wept the whole night through. Murly's saw her not the next day, and when Elmer called that evening, she was away from home. Learning where she had gone, he followed her there and coolly took possession of her when at a late hour she prepared for home. His manner very tender, but circumspect, did not deceive Rosie. When he again called to see her, she was again away attending a party, and again he followed her. It was from then on a constant chase. Rosie frightened, fled persistently and he as persistently pursued her. She was afraid of him, but more afraid of herself. She loved him, he knew. She blushed and trembled with happiness when after fleeing him, he appeared before her.

"Why do you avoid me, Rosie?" he asked a thousand times.

"I'm afraid," Rosie would answer.

Afraid of him, fleeing from him, yet almost wild with joy when he was by her side. She spent all her evenings away from home with Myrtle, with the General or with one or another of her friends, but wherever she went, Elmer was sure to follow. His constancy and tender devotion in the face of her resistance charmed the girl. She had not strength of mind enough to cast him off. He was, in spite of her fear of him, her only joy and happiness. Her home life was an endless round of misery. Her mother hated her. She had no longer a kind word for Rosie. The girl was in her way. The widow had her own affairs, and furious at Rosie's beauty, her fancied purity and innocence, she became outrageous in her treatment of the girl. Were it not for the hope she entertained of Rosie's speedy marriage, she would have driven the girl from her house. Rosie was very unhappy. Life was becoming unbearable. She thought her mother's actions very strange of late. She often came upon the Rev. Ringrose in the parlor, and she could not understand his constant presence there. She never dreamed of doubting her mother's chastity. She thought the minister's free and easy manner of lounging about the house very strange and the man became odious to her sight. Once or twice she heard her mother's voice raised as if in extreme anger when she and the minister were alone together in the front parlor. Mrs. Rosewood frequently went away for days, and by a curious coincidence, the local brevities in the news columns of the daily papers, invariably announced the absence of the Rev. Mortimer Ringrose at those times. She had gone to Forestville to visit her sister, the paper said; he to Traviston, to Belton, to Mathews or to Mercury, to spend a few days with a brother minister. The little widow, too, had become very active in church work, which fact puzzled little Rosie exceedingly. Certainly her mother's surprising religious enthusiasm did not soften her heart towards her daughter. Coming home after a hard day's work, she was met by a scowling shrew who seemed to delight in tyrannizing over the poor girl.

Rosie longed to escape her tyranny but she could see no way clear. Elmer often spoke of marriage to her, picturing their happy future to the enraptured girl, but always there followed upon the heels of this, that which made her shrink away from him. He could not marry just yet. His father would not hear of it. He was very stern with him. He would infallibly disown him if he went counter to his wishes. She must trust him. He would surely marry her some day, but why wait for happiness so long? He pleaded eloquently. He sighed and gazed reproachfully at her. He upbraided her, saying that she did not love him. Oh, she did! she did! Then why could she not trust him? Let her prove her love, and he would defy his father, defy his mother, defy the whole world and marry her. But he demanded the proof, and the proof he asked terrified the girl.

She did not distrust Elmer. She believed him good and noble. She doubted not that he would surely marry her. She did not distrust him, but with all a pure girl's horror she shrank with shame from the contemplation of unchastity. But she loved Elmer and he loved her. All her life she had longed for love. Love me! Love me! had been the constant cry of her heart. Elmer loved her passionately. How could she doubt his protestations, his burning kisses, his sighs, and faithful attendance? And for this love she was deeply grateful, and in pure gratitude she faltered and hesitated, and tremblingly thought of yielding to his pleadings. She was a weak, loving woman; she had her own passion to contend with as well as his; her home life was miserable, perhaps her yielding would hasten the day of release. Elmer would not forsake her. She would be happy with him. Such thoughts persisted in presenting themselves to Rosie's mind and by persistently dwelling upon them, they came at last to appear to her in the light of a promise and a release.

One evening Elmer came to the store to see Rosie as was his habit when he wished to arrange for an evening's amusement in her company.

"I've got tickets for the dance tonight at Elroy's, Rosie," he said. "Would you like to go with me?"

The little maid colored with pleasure, but hesitated, gazing into his beautiful eyes with deep emotion.

"I—I don't think I'd better," she gasped out at last, pressing her hand to her heart.

"Why, Rosie?" murmured Elmer, reproachfully. "You used to be glad to go with me."

"I am now," said Rosie agitatedly; "but—but I can't go! Oh, don't ask me, Elmer. Don't come to see me any more. It breaks my heart to be unkind to you but — it will — be — best!"

"Now, Rosie, you know you are talking nonsense," Elmer replied in that masterful tone, which thrilled Rosie through and through. "You belong to me and nothing on earth shall make me give up my little girl. I am coming up tonight, Rosie, and I shall expect to find you ready. Do you hear, Rosie?"

"Yes, Elmer," she replied in a low voice.

"And you'll be ready when I come, Rosie?"

Rosie nodded dimpling and blushing beneath his ardent gaze. She went home palpitating, half determined to flee from this temptation. But she had flown before to no purpose. Elmer would surely seek her out, and his soft reproachful glances would pierce her to the heart. Her mother, she found on reaching home had gone away. Lottie, a married woman with a family of her own, had a sick baby at home, and stayed only long enough to prepare supper for little Rosie.

When Elmer called later in the evening, Rosie wearing her prettiest finery met him at the door, doubtful still and full of a nameless fear of she knew not what— a feeling at once terrifying and delicious, because vague and undefined, yet suggestive of unknown delights. She pressed her lover's arm with both of her little hands as they walked along and showed all her pretty teeth and roguish dimples in smiling gayly up at him. She chatted with uncommon spirit and laughed and danced in the darkness in pure lightness of heart.

The dance was a glorious success. Elmer danced almost every number with her, he would not let her out of his keeping even for a moment. In vain did suitors crowd around the blooming little maid, in vain they sued and clamored for her favors. She belonged all to Elmer; she had no

glance for any one else. And when, the dance over, they proceeded homeward Elmer proposed a little supper, Rosie acceded eagerly and with him repaired to Trainor's of happy memory, where they spent quite two hours, which to little Rosie sped like minutes, in the intoxicating joy of Elmer's presence. She sipped a glass of wine—two glasses at Elmer's solicitation. She ate heartily of the rich food. Elmer brought the talk to bear upon the play which long ago they had witnessed in company. He was constantly recurring to this play when with little Rosie, constantly talking about it, and dilating upon its central feature— a secret marriage—contracted by the lovers themselves and later sanctioned by the church and pronounced by the law to be perfectly legal and binding. Rosie remembered it well. The lovers simply clasped hands and repeated the words of the marriage service and the thing was done. It was so easy, said Elmer, and so had said a thousand, thousand times, since that happy evening, speaking half in jest and half in earnest—so simple and feasible. So it was, agreed Rosie. Then why not enter into a like union with him? Rosie laughed gayly. Always this query followed upon the heels of this subject.

"Now, Rosie, listen to me," said Elmer, when they were once more in the street, walking slowly homeward. "I am in deadly earnest. I want to marry you, and I can't wait for my father's sanction. Do you love me well enough to trust me as the girl trusted her lover in the play? Do you, little Rosie?"

"Oh, Elmer, you know how dearly I love you," Rosie replied.

"Then say you will, darling, say it," urged Elmer.

"I — I'm afraid," gasped Rosie.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked tenderly.

Rosie did not know, only she was afraid. She pressed closer to him, smiling with trembling lips.

"You know, darling, that such a marriage would be a true one," Elmer said.

Rosie nodded. She saw no reason to doubt it at all. Had she not seen with her own eyes? Heard with her own ears? Rosie accepted religiously as solemn truth everything

she saw enacted upon the stage. But — but it would be such a funny thing to do! So she hesitated, giggling and shaking her head.

"You want me to marry you," Elmer said brutally, "yet when I offer to do so in the only way open to us at present, you draw back!"

"Dear Elmer, I do not draw back," murmured Rosie. "I love you. Only I should so like to have a wedding like other girls."

"That will come later," cried Elmer.

It was very late. The little cottage was dark as night. The town slept. From afar came the fitful baying of dogs. Rosie crept close to Elmer for the weather was cold. She felt warm within from the wine she had drunk, and the movement was archly coquettish. Elmer kissed her. She laughed aloud and was almost frightened at the reckless sound.

"Put your hands in mine, Rosie," whispered Elmer, pausing beside the little verandah, "and let us say the words just as they were said in the play."

Rosie giggling, did so, and Elmer repeated the words as well as he recalled them; Rosie, smiling as if it were all great fun, said them after him. Her head was in a whirl. She felt quite giddy, but when it was all over, and Elmer clasped her in his arms, she returned his embrace in a transport of passion.

"Now we're married, Rosie," said Elmer. "You are my wife."

"It—doesn't seem true," gasped Rosie, who was very pale and panting with emotion.

It was not a true marriage, and oh! deep down in her heart she knew it. And yet — and yet—with her arms around his neck, she kissed him passionately. How beautiful he was! How good to her, how lovable in every way! They were now in the shadow of the little porch, where so often they had parted in the past. Elmer showed no intention of departing now. On the contrary, he mounted the steps by Rosie's side, with his arms around her waist, smiling in a way that seemed both strange and sweet to Rosie's eyes. Rosie remembered with a feeling of vague alarm in which

was strongly mingled a certain sweet gladness that her mother was away from home; gone on one of her mysterious journeys which of late had become so frequent and prolonged.

"Let us go in," whispered Elmer, softly kissing her.

"No, no," replied Rosie, restraining him with a fluttering hand. "There is no one there. Mama is away."

Elmer chuckled. Evidently he had known of Mama's absence.

"Come, Rosie," he said, and gently pushed open the door.

Rosie drew back frightened.

"No, no," she gasped. "I — I had better not. I — I will see Aunt Sadie tomorrow, and—and ask her about it—about the marriage I mean in the play."

"Come, Rosie," was Elmer's reply. "Come, darling."

He drew her on gently, smiling down into her shining eyes.

"Oh, Elmer, have pity," she murmured, suddenly throwing herself upon his breast.

She was crying now, sobbing indeed in utter abandon, with her arms encircling his neck, and her face pressed against his bosom.

Laughing softly he lifted her up in his arms and carried her into the house; Rosie protesting confusedly to the last.

"I'm afraid—please go away, Elmer. My dear love! I don't believe I belong to you. Oh what would Aunt Sadie say! You will marry me really and truly Elmer?"

The door closed softly upon them, and all was quiet as death around the little cottage.

* * * * *

Aunt Sadie entering Murly's glittering emporium some days later became at once the center of attraction to the bustling, blooming little creatures behind the counters. Her coming always created a stir and flutter, for all were eager for a smile or a word from good Aunt Sadie, whom one and all had known and loved from earliest infancy. She looked so good and kind always, she was so sweet and motherly, and withal so grand and stately that grown girls became as

children in her presence. They smiled brightly across at her; they blew her a thousand kisses; some called her by name or beckoned, enticingly displaying their prettiest wares for her inspection. Old Murly going his slip-shod way through the store paused in some astonishment, and gazed around in search of the cause of this unusual commotion. Observing Aunt Sadie going from counter to counter, he grunted comprehendingly and re-entered his little office in the rear.

"What is it, Rosie?" asked Aunt Sadie, pausing beside that blooming little maid, whose sad, wistful gaze had attracted her from afar.

"I only wanted to ask you something, Auntie," replied Rosie, plucking nervously at the corners of her apron.

Aunt Sadie waited, smiling.

"Do you remember a play that came here some weeks ago, Auntie?—a play in which the lovers marry themselves by clasping hands and repeating the marriage service? Don't you remember, I was there with Elmer and we came to your box and sat with you, oh, ever so long—through all the last act? Don't you remember it, Auntie?"

Aunt Sadie was not sure. She had seen so many plays and she forgot them as quickly as possible so that she could enjoy them again, when next they visited the little city. But Rosie persisted recalling so many little things about the play in question, that presently it all came back to the good lady and she cried out that she remembered the story down to its uttermost detail.

"But what of it, Rosie?" asked Aunt Sadie.

"I only wanted to ask you about it, dear Auntie," said Rosie, blushing and paling by turns. "I—I've been thinking about it ever since; and—and I wanted to know. *Would* that marriage be really and truly binding, Auntie? Not in the play, you know, but in real life?"

"Why, no, my dear," cried Aunt Sadie, laughing. "You mustn't believe everything you see on the stage. Anything can happen in a play, my love."

Rosie, smiling faintly, murmured an incoherent reply, and Aunt Sadie, nodding kindly to the little maid went on her way. Rosie, left alone, leaned weak and pale against the

shelves behind, following with her eyes Aunt Sadie's tall form, as she went about among her friends, until her purchases completed she left the store.

"Anything can happen in a play!"

Aunt Sadie said it! There was then no truth at all in her marriage. Then what was she? O God! A strumpet, an outcast! and yet—and yet—had she not known? Alas! Even in the height of her passion, she had realized the untruth of it all; and when passion had given way to sober reason, she had trembled with a dread uncertainty, born of a childish trust in what she had seen and a loving faith in Elmer. He would not deceive her. She trusted him absolutely, and even now, when convinced of the hollow falsity of it all, her faith in him remained unshaken.

"Dear Elmer," she said, when next he came to her, "we must get married at once."

"But we are married, Rosie," he replied, smiling.

"No, Elmer, no! Aunt Sadie says the marriage in the play was only make-believe, Elmer, and Aunt Sadie knows. But we did not know that, did we, Elmer?" said Rosie, timidly.

"No," replied Elmer, chuckling. "We didn't know it, Rosie."

"But you will marry me now, Elmer, a real true marriage?" she asked imploringly.

"Some day, Rosie. You must trust me."

"Yes, I must—now!" Rosie replied, hiding her face with a movement of shame.

Elmer laughed and caressed her, and for the moment she was happy. But new doubts assailed her in after days, doubts of Elmer's constancy and faith.

And so Rosie stands behind her counter, sad-eyed and wistful, because ashamed and afraid.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH MR. WATTERSON IS APPEALED TO ON SENTIMENTAL GROUNDS.

Mr. Watterson had removed his soft felt hat, his gloves and heavy ulster, and was standing before his desk looking down at the heap of letters awaiting his attention. He heard voices in the adjoining office of his secretary, the voices of two men raised in heated altercation, but sat down rubbing his hands together softly with the air of a man who is sure of remaining undisturbed. He was, however, mistaken in this supposition, for before he had well begun on his correspondence, Delaware opened the door and showed a red and agitated countenance to his chief.

"A gentleman, sir, who wishes to see you," announced the secretary, closing the door softly, "he will take no refusal, sir."

"Well, Delaware," said Mr. Watterson, smiling, "if he will take no refusal, we must even admit him. Hold!" he added hastily, "he is not a newspaper man I hope?"

"No, sir, no, no! I know them a mile off."

"Then admit him."

In view of the great man's high good humor, Delaware beamed affably upon the visitor in admitting him to the august presence. He was a tall, thin man, elderly, with a closely clipped steel grey beard, sharp little eyes, large nose and large hands encased in black kid gloves—a type of leading business man, and of Scottish origin as could be seen at a glance. He wore a fur trimmed ulster and a peaked cap of fine sealskin. Mr. Watterson waved him courteously to a seat and waited in silence for him to speak.

"Mr. Watterson," he began, throwing open his overcoat, and seating himself with his cap held in one gloved hand pressed against a bony knee, "my name is Woolworth —Malcolm Woolworth, and I am in the lumber business, President of the Cairo Lumber Company."

He paused to see if this bit of information conveyed any recognition. Mr. Watterson stroked his beard reflectively, but his face remained impassive.

"I made my start in Cairo, Illinois, thirty-five years ago, but the present headquarters of the concern are in Chicago. Mr. Watterson, you have heard of the Forestry Bill?"

Mr. Watterson bowed.

"Of course," continued the other "I have even heard that your interest—your influence has been gained for the men behind that measure, sir?"

"You have heard wrong, sir," replied Mr. Watterson with a weary glance at his letters.

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Woolworth opening his mouth dryly by way of a smile, "the reason I am here is to ask your influence to defeat the Forestry Bill, or at least to ask you to withdraw—pardon me—withhold your support from the other side. I believe you are a just man, and my daughter tells me that you are a generous one."

"Your daughter, sir," said Mr. Watterson in surprise. "Pardon me, Mr. Woolworth—hold—Woolworth—Woolworth! Ah, you are the father of Mary Woolworth? My daughter spent some months with you a couple of years ago?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Woolworth smiling for all the world like a gasping fish. "Miss Watterson and Mary attended college together. They were the closest of friends. Naturally they talked much of their fathers and from your daughter, Mary learned something of your character."

"You surprise me Mr. Woolworth," said Mr. Watterson shaking his great head and smiling, "that you should consider testimony coming from such a source—"

"I know, I know," said Mr. Woolworth with his dry smile, "it would be rather partial I admit, but then I would rather rely upon such testimony and my study of you through your published orations, than upon the criticisms and charges preferred against you by newspaper critics and envious political failures. My daughter Mary is a remarkable woman, a clever woman, a woman of rare business ability. However, that is neither here nor there—I men-

tion it merely as a kind of excuse for my otherwise unwarranted intrusion. Mr. Watterson I want to appeal to your sense of justice. You have the power I believe, if you care to use it, to defeat this measure, which is a monstrous injustice to myself and my business associates. We have millions behind us, I am not appealing to you in the guise of a poor oppressed worm pursued by a dragon, not at all—but Mr. Watterson, I need hardly tell a man of your superior intelligence that justice may sometimes be on the side of millions. Is it not so?"

"Go on."

"Just so. Well, sir, the Cairo Lumber Company has bought up some thousands of acres of timber in various parts of the State but mainly in Southern Illinois where forests abound, and we have put millions of money into saw mills and plants of various kinds designed to convert the raw product into finished material for building and other purposes. We conduct our business along legitimate lines, but naturally following the trend of the times we have been forging ahead steadily working to gain a monopoly of the business. I believe in monopoly, sir. It is the legitimate result of modern business methods. Competition is out of date. One must get a monopoly of the business he is engaged in, not only to succeed in it, but for pure self-preservation's sake. We planned that if we could consolidate all the lumber concerns in the State into a trust we could by reducing expense of manufacture lower the prices on finished material to a figure absolutely prohibitive to lumber dealers in surrounding States, thus making it impossible for them to invade our territory. We would gain absolute control of the lumber trade in this State. Do you follow me, Mr. Watterson?"

"Yes, sir. Go ahead." Mr. Watterson was evidently becoming interested.

"Well sir, we followed the usual methods. We made overtures to our powerful rivals, showing them the advantage of consolidation and quickly won them over. Then we started in on a warfare of extermination on the smaller fry, forcing them into line or out of business entirely, by invading their territory and selling the finished material below cost of manufacture; and in this way after half a dozen

years of ceaseless fighting and maneuvering the Cairo Lumber Company controlled the Illinois trade, and by buying up immense tracts of forests nearest the lines of transportation, we controlled the output of the entire State. You will understand that the middlemen—the builders, contractors and furniture men, could not possibly suffer through this combination, for while we control the lumber, raw and finished in this State, there are States all around us—Indiana—Michigan—Wisconsin—and others, which not only possess mighty forests, but many keen and far-sighted business men in the trade, who would invade our markets if they could possibly do so with profit. So in order to hold our own, we were compelled to keep within a certain limit."

"Too bad," said Mr. Watterson, dryly.

"Just so," responded the lumber merchant, looking hard at the big boss. "Now when it became known that we were in absolute control of the trade, a fear took possession of certain middlemen—notably James Carroll of Chicago and Montario of Peoria, big furniture men, who got it into their heads that with encouragement and support we would expand still more, until, gradually covering all the neighboring States, we should be in absolute control of the output of all the Middle States."

"A not unnatural fear," said Mr. Watterson.

"Well—ah—no. In fact, we had plans made for that purpose, and had already won over certain leading dealers in Indiana and in Michigan. And we have but begun. Why, sir; I believe that our concern will in time embrace the entire country."

"Pray, Mr. Woolworth," said Mr. Watterson, in smiling protest, for the lumber merchant had started up in a burst of enthusiasm which bade fair to carry him away, "if you will compose yourself and proceed——"

"Just so, sir; just so," said the Scotchman, reseating himself. "I founded the Cairo Lumber Company; it grew under my management from a small, one-horse concern to its present proportions, and I am naturally a little—ah—daft about it. Well, sir; these men, Carroll of Chicago and Montario of Peoria, started a movement against us among the trade. It would seem, sir, at first sight that

such a movement among disorganized forces, and among men of different lines of trade, would be unsuccessful against an organized body of keen business men—but the thing got wind—meetings were held and largely attended—the Chicago *Courier,* a yellow journal, sir, took up the fight against us—enthusiasm was worked up, and, in a word, public opinion favored our opponents, and they made headway. Public opinion, sir, is an intangible thing, but to fight against it is like swimming against a mighty current. We labored under the double disadvantage of not having a complete monopoly and of being partly under the ban of the railroads, which would enter into no special agreement with us as to rates, because by controlling the raw product we were able to dictate terms to them in the matter of ties, of which a well-managed railroad requires millions annually. If this uprising had come one year later, we should have been firmly established in several surrounding States and we could have defied both the public and the railroads, for when we have attained a sure and certain monopoly we shall be in a position to repeat with emphasis the dictum pronounced by certain gentlemen in the East—'The public be damned,' and the railroads will be obliged to yield to us. As it was, Carroll and Montario combined with others, and sent one expedition after another into Michigan, and by means of the convenient lakes they managed to bring much lumber into the State, at a comparatively slight cost. Other dealers did the same, and we were for a time nonplused. Ruin stared us in the face. But, sir, the fools cut their own throats. They avoided the big dealers of Michigan, considering them already bound to us, and went to the owners in the raw, got their timber cheaper in this way; but they offended the big lumber merchants, who were forced for self-preservation's sake to form an alliance of offense and defense against the invaders. So, you see, they worked into our hands. We awaited the right moment, and then made our overtures and met with success. I have just returned from a tour of Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin, where I not only made arrangements for consolidation, but also bought up so much timber in the most

accessible parts of the State as to seriously cripple the various bodies organized against us."

"Shrewd," was Mr. Watterson's admiring comment.

"But, sir, the matter had by this time become of universal interest. We do not court publicity, sir; in fact, it is a thing that I abhor. We had no sooner brought Carroll and Montario and Company to terms than the fight was taken up by the quarrymen and the steel and iron dealers, and in fact by every kind of concern that furnishes a bolt, a screw, or thingumbob to the building of a structure of any kind. We have fought them, sir, for some weeks openly, and we have held our own, but under the late leadership of a man, who, sir, is worth his weight in gold, they have resorted to methods which we business men find it impossible to combat."

"Well?" said Mr. Watterson, as the other paused and gazed pensively at the floor.

"Well, sir; the end of all this fighting is the Forestry Bill which, by God!—pardon me, sir—which deprives us of the right to cut certain timbers at all, and of using other parts only under ironclad and impossible conditions. And this, under the absurd pretense of preserving our forests! Now is not that outrageous? We acquire—legitimately acquire—certain property, and then the law steps in and declares that we shall not use that property, because by doing so we would be despoiling the commonwealth of all its natural beauty. I put it to you, sir, is not that outrageous and unjust?"

"This Forestry Bill is vouched for by whom?" asked Mr. Watterson.

"Nominally by Dickson of Chicago, but really by Southgate of Peoria."

"By whom?" said Mr. Watterson, in a deep voice.

"By Southgate of Peoria. There are millions behind it, and we cannot afford to fight it with money, and therefore I come to you. I believe that a word—one word—from you will defeat this measure."

"Nonsense! Even allowing that my word carried weight with those of my party, you forget that the Demo-

crats have a majority in both houses—not to mention Southgate's forces."

"I will guarantee enough Democratic votes to secure victory if you will use your influence with the members of your party. The bill is not considered of any great importance as yet."

"But my interference will instantly make it so."

"Even so, it is not a party measure at all."

"Again, my interference will make it so."

"Well," said Mr. Woolworth, a little at a loss, "we must beat it. The passage of this measure will mean utter annihilation to us. We shall have to go back to the old one-horse methods of thirty years ago, and that in these progressive times is impossible to a business man. It will do away with organization in any State as far as lumber interests are concerned, for, of course, other States will follow Illinois' lead. Now, Mr. Watterson, I know you are no enemy to legitimate organization. I have read many of your speeches and am fairly familiar with your ideas on the subject. Look at it any way you will. We began business at the bottom of the ladder and advanced with the times, but we advanced legitimately. You are a business man, Mr. Watterson, and you understand that in these times we have got to forge ahead or go down. In pure self-defense you must grasp advantages as they arise; there is no standing still. The moment you pause you are left behind in the race. We early saw the advantage, in fact, the absolute necessity of consolidation. We combined and went on and on to victory. We invested millions in plants, in mills, and in timber, and we now stand in a fair way of being ruined by what is nothing more nor less than a cloud of sentimental rubbish stirred up by unscrupulous men to hide their nefarious designs on legitimate trade. If they fought us in the open, in competition, sir, it would be all right, but to come at us under cover of fake sentiment, calling us monsters of iniquity, despoilers of our beautiful forests, and so on and so forth—why, it riles me, Mr. Watterson—it riles me, sir!"

"The measure is very popular," said the politician, thoughtfully.

"In the city, yes; but not in the country, where it strikes and where its existence is hardly known. The outcry against trusts makes anything that bids fair to cripple a trust popular with the city masses. They do not consider it possible that right can be on the side of the great trust. It is in your power to help us, Mr. Watterson. Osborne, the Republican leader in the Cairo district, assures me that you never interfere in legislation, but Mary, my daughter, is sure that you will use your influence on the side of justice. She was so certain of this that I came to you on her earnest solicitation. It may sound odd coming from a practical business man, but so it is." Then Mr. Woolworth burst into a dry cackle. "Upon my word," he said, "I am appealing to you on sentimental grounds. I didn't mean to do so. I didn't mean to mention my daughter to you, nor say one word about her friendship for Miss Watterson. But when a man's life work is in danger of annihilation—you understand, Mr. Watterson?"

"I will look into it," said Mr. Watterson. "Something can be done, no doubt. There is time?"

"A couple of weeks."

"Very well. By the way, is there a Mr. Marblemore connected with you in any way?"

"Not that I can recall at this moment. It is quite possible, however."

"No. His interests are always important enough to make him a factor in whatever he goes into. If he is not with you, I'll engage that he is opposed to you. From him I shall learn the other side."

"Just so. Just so."

"You are sure Southgate is for the bill?"

"Yes. I was at first going to him, but learned that the opposing forces had already secured his interest. That was early in the game, when I had determined to use money and defeat the thing by fair means or foul. I changed my mind, however, upon talking the matter over with my daughter, who has a wonderful head for business. She would not hear of bribery, and utterly abhors men of Southgate's stamp. A woman, sir, is always for purity, for

honesty and for right. I will go now, Mr. Watterson, I have taken up too much of your time already."

"Do you stay in town for any length of time?" asked Mr. Watterson. "If so, I shall feel honored if you will become my guest."

"The honor would be mine, sir," replied the lumber merchant, suavely, "but unfortunately I am due at Chicago this evening."

"Some other time, perhaps. Bring your daughter."

"Thank you."

They shook hands warmly, and Mr. Watterson turned to his letters. He went through them with his usual deliberation, and, summoning Delaware, dictated replies to those calling for immediate attention, reserving some for future response and others for personal attention. Other visitors called; lawyers who frequently came to consult him on some knotty legal point, a politician or two, jolly Billy Boyle, accompanied by his faithful Hannah, and three or four farmers from the surrounding country, who came to him as to an old friend to talk over the prices of broom corn and speculate on the chances of the next crop. He received them all with his usual kindly courtesy, remaining until late in the evening when, donning hat and overcoat, he made his way to the Marblemore bank. The great banker sat in his little box, occupied with Mr. Dayton and Mr. Everhart. He shook hands cordially with Mr. Watterson. Mr. Everhart nodded with his usual composure, but Mr. Dayton plunged forward eagerly.

"How do, Watterson," cried he, "cold as hell, ain't it?"

Mr. Watterson seated himself apart prepared to wait. With such an important visitor waiting the banker soon disposed of the other two.

"Well, Winfield," he said, drawing up his chair when they were alone. "Am I to have that Senatorship?"

"It is not in my keeping, Andrew."

"Oh, yes, it is. However, I don't care for it. You must take it, Winfield. You've got to. Illinois is the greatest State in the Union and should be fitly represented in the nation's highest body. If you again reject the seat you are no worthy son of Illinois."

"Plenty of time, Andrew. Nightingale has eighteen months yet."

"Just time to elect a Republican legislature, eh? Remember, Winfield, you can call on me for five thousand dollars to your campaign fund. Five thousand at any rate, and ten thousand if you come out openly for the Senate."

"Thank you, Andrew. Are you interested in having this Forestry Bill passed?"

"Well, rather," replied the banker, coolly. "I originated it, and I am engineering the whole thing."

Mr. Watterson raised his brows, a way he had, but on the whole he was not very much astonished. He had, in fact, half expected this. He had become accustomed to the gigantic schemes of this remarkable man. Through his extensive holdings in railroads, in oil, in lands and in various other interests of importance this country banker had become a figure of national note.

"Truly, Andrew, you are a genius," said Mr. Watterson. "It does not seem so very long since you came to me a horny-handed farm lad. And now you are a giant, a colossus in the world of finance!"

"I owe all I am to you, Winfield," said Mr. Marblemore, in accents of deep emotion, "I owe my start to you; to your helping hand my rise is due. Your fortune served as a foundation for mine. I owe all I am to you."

"Bah! Bah! Nonsense!" said the politician, impatiently, "you offered your services to me and they were accepted because I stood in need of them. You proved your worth and rose naturally and inevitably by your own merit. As far as my fortune goes, it may have served as a foundation for yours, but in building upon it you increased my wealth fourfold—aye, eightfold. You owe me nothing. You owe your present eminence to your own industry, pluck and rare business ability. But tell me about this Forestry Bill, Andrew. Why should such solid interests as those behind this measure combine to push it through? Why should a practical business man get up a measure such as this? You, I know, care little for our scenic beauty, nor are you given to investing money in nonsensical rubbish. But let me tell you first that I have a purpose in question-

ing you—my assistance has been asked to defeat this measure, and the reasons given induce me much to undertake the task."

"Let it alone, Winfield," said the banker, smiling broadly, "even you can't beat it. We've got Southgate."

"Have you?" replied Mr. Watterson, dryly.

"Yes," said Mr. Marblemore, exultingly, "and we've got Sutherland, the boss lobbyist of them all. The bill is as good as passed."

"You forget, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson, mildly, "or perhaps you do not know, that I have but to say a word to Sutherland to make him instantly abandon your interests."

"You don't say so?" cried Mr. Marblemore, opening his eyes wide, "but supposing he had taken our money—two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?"

"He will return it to you."

The banker now became genuinely alarmed. Mr. Watterson never exaggerated, he knew.

"But you won't interfere, Winfield," he said, "the thing means a good deal to us."

"Tell me about it, Andrew. Why do you wish to ruin this lumber concern? You are too sound a business man to take up the quarrels of other men."

"I am taking up no man's quarrel, save my own," replied the banker. "The Cairo Lumber Company controls the lumber trade of this State absolutely, as you doubtless know, but not content with that, the men behind it want to control everything that goes to the building of a cottage, a modern apartment house or a gigantic skyscraper, such as are now the rule in our great cities. Comparatively little lumber is used in modern building, but much steel, iron and stone. They no sooner gained control of the lumber trade than they started to deal in other lines. In the space of a single year, so shrewd were they and powerful, that they got control of many quarries in the northern part of the State, and before another year had passed they held such heavy interests in the Pittsburg Steel Company—the largest concern in the world—that they were practically in position to dictate terms to contractors and builders. You see their lumber monopoly enabled them to push their iron, steel and

stone in the face of all opposition. They are shrewd business men, keen, brainy and unscrupulous, and the most aggressive and daring bandits I ever had to do with. They were for monopoly pure and simple, and outrageously cool about it. But it was not to be supposed that they were to have their own way in everything. The small dealers in these various lines, in danger of being crushed, and the larger dealers sure of being engulfed, combined their interests and prepared to fight."

"But what had you to do with all this, Andrew?"

"My attention was first called to this concern through certain insolent demands they made upon a railroad in which I am interested. I also held heavy interests in the Peoria Steel and Iron Company at the time, and was considering certain proposals of investment made to me by the Lamont Stone Quarry Company, so that the Cairo Lumber Company menacing me in three different directions I had fairly the right to regard this concern as my enemy in the business sense of the term. I accordingly took means to check their run. I learned the names and standing of all men who had reason to view the company's encroachment with alarm. I made arrangements with these men for a business meeting, which was held some weeks ago at Peoria. Various plans were proposed, but my associates placed sufficient confidence in me to accept my scheme and to choose me as head. I was in favor of an aggressive campaign. I always am. Brains count in maneuvering forces, and determined resistance inevitably command the respect of the enemy. We did fight hard, using every weapon at our disposal, but the monster was too firmly rooted. We could do nothing with money, so I was obliged to resort to strategy, and going to the very root of their strength—their immense timber interests, I thought out this forestry thing, which cannot but seriously cripple our opponents. In fact it will annihilate the Cairo Lumber Company. It is a battle of brains, sir; and I rather think that I hold the trump card. We shall surely win."

"And then?"

"And then," replied the banker, coolly, "the stock of the Cairo Lumber Company will go down to zero, and a

certain gentleman of our acquaintance will get possession of the bulk of it, and after judiciously distributing the rest among his associates, this gentleman will have the embargo removed from off our beautiful forests—in other words, the Forestry Bill will be repealed and the gentleman before referred to will, by combining all contending forces, control the lumber, steel and stone trade of this State and in time of the United States."

Mr. Watterson's big brown eyes became larger and rounder as he listened to the banker coolly unfolding his unscrupulous scheme.

"You are very candid, Andrew," he said, breathing deeply. "You will ruin these men merely to increase your holdings? Come, Andrew, you cannot mean it?"

"It is business, Winfield, modern business. One man's making means the ruin of many. Success in every line of human endeavor is built upon the bones of failure. You ruined many promising politicians in building your political organization."

"No, Andrew, I did not," replied Mr. Watterson, gravely. "Any man with an honest purpose, who showed the smallest degree of promise, was given a chance. You are not using fair means. Withdraw this measure and fight openly."

"We would have no chance against our opponents."

"But politics and business, Andrew, do not mix well."

"On the contrary, Winfield," responded the banker, smiling, "they mix so well that one is absolutely necessary to the other."

"It isn't fair."

"Everything is fair in business."

"Withdraw this measure, Andrew, and come to a compromise with the Cairo Lumber Company. You can do so with advantage to yourself and your associates."

"No."

"Then," said the politician rising, "I'll raise such a tempest about your ears that you will be glad to get from under."

"You cannot harm us, Winfield."

"No?"

"No—for the moment you leave my office I shall wire Sutherland to push the thing through."

Mr. Watterson sent forth his rumbling laugh. "Stick to business, Andrew," he said, smiling, "you are master there, but you know nothing of politics."

"That is true enough. But come, Winfield, you won't interfere?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Ah," said the big man, humorously, "I've been appealed to on sentimental grounds."

"Delaware," said Mr. Watterson when he reached his office, "wire Dillingham and Sagamore to meet me at Springfield in three days."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH BOSS WATTERSON TAKES A HAND.

Three days later Mr. Watterson was at Springfield, the guest of the district's leader, and luxuriously established at the headquarters of the local branch of the Illinois State Republican Club. His arrival at the State Capitol created a furore in political and newspaper circles. He so rarely left his home town, especially since the recent election, at which the Republican party had sustained such overwhelming defeat that something of great importance must have happened to draw him away at this time. Large headlines in the newspapers announced his presence, and much space was devoted to speculation on the probable cause of his unexpected visit. Newspaper men hung about his headquarters by the dozen. Political leaders came from all directions, and members of the law-making body were coming and going constantly.

On the morning following the day of his arrival, Mr. Watterson was closeted with Dillingham, Sagamore and Brockington. The conference lasted three hours; Mr. Delaware, guarding the door of the outer office during the conference, denied admittance to all comers. Farraday of the Chicago *Courier* was prominent among the newspaper men. The cause of Watterson's presence was still a mystery, and Farraday, a thorough ferret, was biting his nails and dancing about almost wild with excitement and impatience.

"I can put you in the way of making a cool thousand, Delaware," he said, nervously, "if you will place me where I can overhear what is going on in there."

"You know how useless it is to make such offers to me," replied Delaware, shaking his head reproachfully. "You know it, Farraday, and still you will do it. I'm surprised."

Farraday, cursing the staunch little man's fidelity, turned away.

About ten in the morning a tall, well-built man, with a pale, brown-bearded face and a moody expression of countenance, arrived, and upon giving his name as Sutherland, was instantly admitted into the outer office to await the end of the meeting within. Mr. Delaware stared at the notorious lobbyist in furtive admiration. He had heard much of him, but rather doubted seeing him sitting there, that so much shrewdness, force and wickedness as was charged to Sutherland, could be bound up in a man so young and handsome. He was called the king of lobbyists. He had, according to popular report, engineered more measures favorable to big corporations through the Legislature than any man alive—than any dozen men. He was rather carelessly attired, and sat in hat and overcoat a dejected figure, before the fascinated little secretary. The voices of the men in the inner room came out to them. Delaware could distinguish the quiet, deep tones of Mr. Watterson's voice, and the roar of Dillingham's formidable laugh came in frequent bursts of discordant glee. Presently the door opened and they came out, Dillingham, fat, red, coarse and genial, leading, followed by Brockington and Sagamore. Mr. Watterson came last, towering head and shoulders above the others.

"Hello, Sutherland!" cried Dillingham, in his boisterous way. "How goes the battle?"

"Oh, so-so," replied Sutherland.

He shook hands all around like an old acquaintance, regarding Mr. Watterson the while with scowling glances. The big man returned his glance with interest. In his chosen vocation the man was a wonder and well worth a second glance.

"You look like rainy weather, Sutherland," said Dillingham, grinning. "Come to speak with Scott, eh? Ha! Ha! Ha! Just a social visit, eh? Oh, Lord, you're up against it for fair, Henry, my boy."

"Come, come, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, in the tone one uses in reproving an over-boisterous boy.

Dick laughed.

"Hot times out there, eh, Delaware?" he said, going to the door. "Whose all out there?"

He opened the door a bit and peeped out. Half a dozen newspaper men approached him on the run.

"Nothing to say," he cried, going out and closing the door behind him. "Not a word, boys, not a word."

He shook his head and laughed his boisterous laugh and began chaffing the boys, with all of whom he was on friendly terms. They liked Dillingham, for he was a jolly good fellow, who would talk upon occasion. His portly figure and coarse, fat face lent themselves readily to laughable caricature, and his ofttimes humorous, and always interesting harangues, clothed in slangy phraseology, made good reading matter which was always acceptable at the home office. He was a rogue to be sure, a rascal of the blackest hue, but that did not detract in the least from his quaint personality.

"Where is old Farraday," he cried, looking around. "Ah, there, old boy! Look at him, fellers, stampin' an' chewin' himself! There's a ferret fer ye! Have we got ye guessin' Farraday? Ho! Ho! There's no use in you fellers hangin' around here. Nothing doin'. No, we're not plannin' no next campaign. Think Scott would have dragged himself away from his home town fer that? Time enough. No hurry. I don't know who'll be our next candidate. Mebbe I will. Ho! Ho! Wouldn't I make a swell Governor, now. No! Winthrop's a dead one. Sagamore, hell! He's too young—only forty. Ain't dry behind the ears yet. Don't care if he is Scott's choice. Winfield Scott Watterson ain't the only thing growin' around on these prairies. I'm here—Richard B. Dillingham. See me? Well, I've got a word in this deal. Who's in? Well, wait. Yes, we've got Southgate on the run. We'll send him to the woods for good, he seems to like 'em so well. Senator Nightingale's seat? Nothing to say. Rupture between me'n Watterson? Ha! Ha! Ha! Wait and see. It don't look like it now, does it, eh? But who knows? I might git a notion and join hands with Southgate, eh? Wouldn't that be great? What?"

He shook his great head and laughed at the reporters, and chaffed them in great good humor. His allusion to a possible future break between himself and Watterson provoked a thousand eager queries from the younger men. For

the air was full of rumors regarding that very thing. Farraday, however, did not tarry to question the tricky politician but at the first mention of Southgate drew his huge derby down over his eyes, and hurried away, almost running.

Brockington and Sagamore came out, but they proved even more reticent than Dillingham. They would not talk at all. They went away, each with his peculiar following, but most of the newspaper men stayed on, hoping to get a summons from the boss.

Mr. Watterson, in the meantime, led the way into an inner room, and waving Sutherland to a seat, he walked up and down the room half a dozen times.

"Well, Sutherland," he said.

"May I ask your reason for sending for me?" asked Sutherland.

He had removed his hat, but still wore his overcoat, and sat with one leg thrown negligently across the other and his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"You have been working very hard of late, Sutherland," said Mr. Watterson, softly. "You do not look at all well."

"Thanks," replied Sutherland, dryly, "but I presume you did not send for me to tell me that?"

"Yes, and to suggest a short vacation."

"Couldn't think of it," said Sutherland, with a laugh. "I take my vacations during the summer months."

"You are working on this Forestry Bill?"

"No."

"I have the word of the man who handles the money."

"No use asking me, then."

"Come, come, Sutherland; how often have I interfered with you in the last ten years?"

"It doesn't matter; you're interfering now."

"You will return this money and you will decline all further dealings with the men behind this measure or—"

"Or?"

"I'll make this town too hot to hold you."

Sutherland sat with his chin sunk on his breast, thinking. Mr. Watterson stood before him frowning mightily while awaiting the lobbyist's answer.

"I don't see why I should yield to you," said Sutherland, looking up suddenly. "I haven't the means of knowing whether you'll win or lose this coming fall. I believe that after all Southgate's got you guessing."

"I'll give you five minutes to make up your mind," said Mr. Watterson, quietly. "You know what I can do, Sutherland."

"If I thought that you had Southgate beaten I'd give in, but I don't know that. Have you? Who's to be your candidate, Watterson—Sagamore?"

"Will you take that vacation?"

"Yes, of course, if you insist," said Sutherland, moodily. "It's a big loss, though—a hell of a big loss, Watterson."

"Bah!" said Mr. Watterson, with a gesture of repugnance.

"It's the biggest thing that ever came into my hands. It's an infernal shame, that's what it is. What do you want to interfere with me for? Why don't you stick to your business of teaching Sunday-school to the country jays you send up here to make laws?"

"Sutherland, you were intended for a better career than to serve as a go-between for conscienceless corporations," said Mr. Watterson, kindly.

"Was I?" said Sutherland, with a bitter oath. "Who was it that kicked me out of the career I entered upon, just when I had gotten a foothold? Who was it, I say? It was you!"

"You know why, Sutherland," said Mr. Watterson, in the same kindly tone as before. "You started right. You had a brilliant future before you. I did much in winning you the nomination. You know that. You were brilliant, yes, but erratic, too—flighty, as Dick put it, but he gave you the chance at my earnest solicitation. You won; you came to Springfield at twenty-five, a member of the body in which Lincoln served. But how did you use your opportunities? With a fine record behind you, with a host of friends and well-wishers around you, you sold your manhood for a few miserable dollars."

"You gave me no chance," said Sutherland, breathing hard.

"You deserved none, sir. You betrayed the people you were elected to serve. And you wanted another chance? Bah! There were too many true men waiting to fill your shoes. Should I have put them aside for you, and risk being betrayed again? No, sir! You had your chance and you threw it aside. You proved yourself corrupt, disloyal, dishonorable—a bribe-taker—and such a man is not to be trusted a second time. But you hurt me, Henry."

"So help me God, Scott, that was the one thing that cut into me! However, there's no use crying over spilt milk. It's done now and it can't be undone. I don't care a damn for the good opinion of the rest, once having lost yours. Will you shake hands, Scott?"

Mr. Watterson held out his large hand with that air of grave kindliness that distinguished him.

"Henry, Henry," he said softly. "I wish—"

"Don't wish it, Scott," said Sutherland, laughing. "I'm all right. I'm on top. I'm not worrying. But I do hate to lose this case."

"You've got to give it up, Henry. Call in your men and give me a list of those whom you have already secured."

"I couldn't in honor do that, Scott." Mr. Watterson smiled. "Oh, it's not your brand, I know," said Sutherland, laughing, "but it satisfies me and secures those with whom I deal. I'll send around a list of the incorruptible, though. So long."

Mr. Watterson, left alone, clasped his hands behind him and went walking up and down the room. He was deeply stirred by memories of the past. How many of his young men had gone the way of Sutherland! He could recall a score without effort, men of brilliant minds, full of promise, but morally weak. From his window he could see the State House, a vast and imposing structure. His ambition was to send none but worthy sons of the soil into its halls, and into the halls of the greater Capitol. Illinois should be worthily represented by men of rectitude and incorruptible honor, men of brilliant minds with lofty ideals and a high regard for the fundamental principles of upright manhood. He had not succeeded always. He had oft-times been obliged to give way to the wishes of political

leaders, less conscientious than himself; often he had been deceived in men as in Sutherland; such aspirants, when discovered, were instantly suppressed. He could not forgive corrupt practices, though he could understand the causes inducing them. There was something contaminating in the very atmosphere of the Capitol. Many had come out of that furnace bright as noonday. They were his friends. He encouraged them to renewed efforts, assisted them in the upward struggle and followed their career with intense eagerness. But while triumphing in their glorious manhood he bitterly regretted those who, like Sutherland, had fallen victims to their greed.

Mr. Dillingham came in noisily, interrupting his Chief's musing. He was accompanied by Mr. Woolworth, and followed by Sagamore and Brockington.

"I've been tellin' Woolworth about expenses, Scott," cried Dillingham, winking.

"Woolworth, you might as well surrender everything to him at once," said Mr. Watterson, with a broad smile.

"I'm willing to put up all the money that is required, gentlemen," Mr. Woolworth declared.

"We don't require any," said Mr. Watterson, quietly.

"The hell we don't," bellowed Dillingham. "No money required! Well, I like that! Speak for yourself, Scott. You may be in this for the fun of the thing, but I'll give you a straight tip, I ain't. I'm no preacher. I'm a politician, I am. Who's going to pay my expenses down here—and my time—fifteen thousand dollars, I figure 'em?"

Mr. Watterson, looking into Dick's red face, could not help laughing; in fact he roared and rumbled in the most disgraceful manner, for Dick's sputtering indignation was really irresistible. Dillingham, however, was very much in earnest.

"These people are well able to pay. They've got money to throw at the birds. And I for one propose to be paid for coming down here and interesting myself in their business."

"Keep cool, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, smiling. "Of course I speak only for myself, Mr. Woolworth."

"I'm willing to pay for services in proportion to their worth," replied the lumber merchant, impatiently, "and I

will not consider this gentleman's charges at all exorbitant if we succeed in defeating this measure. I'm not trying to save money. I'm trying to save myself from being ruined."

"Right, Pop!" cried Dillingham, boisterously, "and we're the lads that'll see you through."

"What do you mean to do?" asked the lumber merchant, looking at Mr. Watterson. "You held a conference this morning, I understand. Have you decided upon any course as yet?"

"My plan is to go in and get enough votes to defeat the bill," said Dillingham, bluntly. "Get 'em by hook or crook. I am for whippin' all we can manage into line and buyin' the rest outright. That's the only way to do this thing and do it right. That's politics, that is. Belgrave will hand over a dozen votes if enough coin is forthcoming. I've dealt with him before."

Belgrave was the acknowledged leader of the Democratic party in Chicago and, no doubt, Dillingham knew what he was talking about. Mr. Watterson shook his head in answer to Mr. Woolworth's glance of inquiry.

"That isn't my way of doing business," said he. "Not one cent shall be spent to defeat this measure."

"Then how—" began Mr. Woolworth.

"If we had a majority in the house I would trust to the sense of right and justice of all organization members to vote against a bill so opposed to the interests of all landowners; but we haven't, and as I do not propose to adopt Dick's methods of wholesale bribery, the only thing that remains for us to do is to raise such an uproar against the measure as to make every legislator pause and reflect before he votes in favor of a bill so unpopular. Public opinion is hard to combat, and public opinion will, if I am not very much mistaken, be set dead against it. You shall presently see how puny we so-called bosses are in the presence of the popular will."

Mr. Woolworth looked exceedingly doubtful, and Dillingham sneered with open scorn. Brockington's expression partook largely of Dillingham's contempt for such a milk-and-water proceeding, but Sagamore nodded reassuringly to Woolworth.

"I've sent Sutherland out of the way," continued Mr. Watterson, "and with him gone, the opposition will be at a loss for some time to come, and time is all we want. By coming here in person I have focused the attention of the entire State upon Springfield, but especially that of the dwellers in the rural districts among whom our support will mainly lie. I have kept my mission a secret for no other purpose than to arouse a deeper curiosity. I shall presently permit myself to be interviewed. I will give my reasons for coming here; I will place the Forestry Bill in its true light before the public. It will be published in the metropolitan dailies and copied by all the country newspapers. It will be discussed pro and con, and this discussion will let light in upon its worst features. All we can do then is to await developments. Trust the people."

"Hang the people," cried Dillingham. "That's what he calls modern politics! Well, I like the old-fashioned way the best. Now, I'll tell you just what'll happen. As soon as it's known that we're against the Forestry Bill, it'll become a party measure and every Democrat in both houses'll think that unless he votes and works for it, he'll be playin' into the hands of the Republican party. Southgate's forces will go against us on general principles. They'll put it through between 'em and we'll be left out in the cold. That's the way things'll turn out by trustin' th' people. People, hell! First git a safe majority and then trust 'em, but not before."

Mr. Woolworth seemed to be strongly of the same opinion and so Mr. Brockington.

"How do you know that the thing will become unpopular?" asked Mr. Woolworth.

"Because I know the people and have studied the measure," said Mr. Watterson, calmly.

"But how will the people make their disapproval manifest so as to defeat the bill?"

"In a hundred ways. Newspapers nowadays do not mould, but voice popular opinion. I shall so place the thing before the public that every person owning a tree, or a bit of land upon which a tree might be grown, will consider his liberties infringed upon by the passage of this bill. And then such a howl will go up! It will be heard from one end

of the country to the other. The press, regardless of politics, must voice this public opinion. Mass meetings will be held in country districts. The thing will be discussed in all its bearings by farmers on country roads and at village stores. The result will be thundering salvos of disapproval and of menace by the country press all over the State. The mail of our legislators will swell prodigiously, and when they go to their homes of a Saturday, as most of them do, their ears will be made to tingle and their flesh to creep at the danger they run of political annihilation by forcing this measure."

"Well, I leave it all to you," said the lumber merchant very much reassured by the politician's boundless confidence. "It seems strange to me," continued Mr. Woolworth, "that having the power to send Sutherland away, you do not banish him for good and all. Keep the Capitol clear of all such vultures."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Watterson, dryly, "I do not set myself up as moral censor of this commonwealth."

A very emphatic sneeze behind him made them all glance in that direction. A kind of screen, which stood half closed in an angle next the door, went down with a crash, revealing Farraday coolly seated in a comfortable armchair with his huge derby hat placed far back on his head, his coat sleeves drawn up and a long lead pencil in his hand.

"Ah, gentlemen," said he, looking around with a charming smile. "I'm exceedingly sorry for interrupting your very interesting conversation. I—"

"How did you get in here?" demanded Mr. Watterson.

"The door stood slightly ajar, sir," replied Farraday, deprecatingly, "and you were all so absorbed that I was unable to make myself heard, and not wishing to intrude, I sat down in the most convenient chair to await the termination of your conference."

"Talk about cheek," cried Mr. Dillingham, laughing.

"I suppose you heard everything that passed?" said Mr. Watterson, frowning.

"I am afflicted with a slight deafness," said Farraday, delicately, "and moreover paid little heed to your conversation."

A shout of laughter interrupted him.

"Ah, Mr. Woolworth, I'm delighted to see you," continued Farraday, flashing his teeth and glasses at the lumber merchant, who scowled back at him with anything but a friendly expression. "Mr. Watterson, I have just come from Southgate's headquarters—that is, half an hour ago," continued Farraday, by way of a careless reminder. "I saw Southgate, and upon my informing him that your presence here was owing solely to your opposition to the Forestry Bill—"

"But how did you know?" demanded the big politician.

"In my profession, Mr. Watterson, one learns to put two and two together. My kind friend Dillingham let fall an incautious remark about Southgate's passion for the woods, and seeing my excellent friend, Mr. Woolworth, joining him shortly after, and knowing something of my excellent friend Mr. Woolworth's late troubles with the United Steel, Stone and Iron men, I at once concluded that your visit was connected with the Forestry Bill, and as Southgate was for it, you would naturally be against it. Southgate very kindly consented to talk. I have his statement here, and my purpose in coming to you was to get an answer to it, so that your two statements may appear side by side in the *Morning Courier.*"

"Is the dark secret already a matter of common knowledge?"

"It doubtless is in Chicago," said Farraday, coolly. "I wired the home office before calling upon Southgate."

"There's a cool one," cried Dillingham. "He jumps wildly to a conclusion and without trying to make it good he wires his paper with a good deal more guess-work, I'll be bound."

"No, no, gentlemen," protested Farraday, modestly, "a half a column, no more, I assure you."

Upon which Dick laughed loud and long, the others joining him, with the exception of Mr. Woolworth, who sat grimly by, staring coldly at the cheeky correspondent.

"Well, Farraday," said Mr. Watterson, "call in the other boys, and then you can take down my answer."

"By no means," said Farraday hastily, "I leave it to you, Mr. Watterson. Don't I deserve this beat? I worked

the thing out without assistance, saw Southgate, and got in here past that lynx-eyed Delaware and all. And must I share this thing with the others? That isn't fair, gentlemen. Come, now, I've got to work alone; they've shut me out of the combine. You know that, Dick? This ain't much of a scoop, but it'll show my editor that I'm at the bat. Dick, do I get a few hours' start?"

"Sure thing!" replied Dillingham, cordially.

"Let us hear what Southgate has to say," said Mr. Watterson.

"Certainly," replied Farraday, cheerfully.

It was not the usual angry tirade, such as Southgate generally indulged in, but a clean, sober review of the measure, made very clear and readable by Farraday's lucid style. He called the Forestry Bill the People's Bill, and declared it to be the result of a popular demand for the preservation of the grand forests of the commonwealth. He charged Mr. Watterson with entertaining murderous designs upon the People's Bill, called him the enemy of the people and the friend of trusts. He cried out against a body of men who, for the purpose of swelling their dividends, would wantonly destroy the natural beauties of Lincoln's grand old State. The forests were Nature's parks, God's free gifts to the people, and they should be preserved with jealous care, and so on and so forth.

"Rather neatly handled, I flatter myself," said Farraday, complacently.

"Is that your's or Southgate's?" asked Dillingham, with a grin.

"Southgate's in substance; mine in dressing."

"Why don't you dress my talk up that way when you trot me out, eh?" said Dick, rather enviously.

"You're worth too much in the original, Dick. Now, Mr. Watterson."

"Do you know the history of this measure?"

"Sure. It's my business to know everything. I worked the whole thing up for my paper. That's how I formed the distinguished acquaintance of my excellent friend, Mr. Woolworth. Wrote him up lots of times."

Mr. Woolworth's scowl attested the fact. Farraday lit

a cigarette and prepared to write. Sitting, surrounded by his friends, Mr. Watterson dictated his reply at length. Farraday wrote with exceeding rapidity, putting question after question as he wrote, all tending to throw a brighter light upon the subject in hand. The writing finished, he read aloud what he had written.

After lightly sketching the history of the fight between the Cairo Lumber Company and the United Steel, Stone and Iron workers, Farraday followed with Mr. Watterson's statement. It declared in effect that the Forestry Bill was an attack upon the liberties of the people. If allowed to become a law it would infallibly lead to greater and greater curtailment of their constitutional rights. Such a law would not only be an injustice to the farmer who, owning timber, could neither use nor dispose of it; but it would react upon the people at large. It would make building practically impossible, as to import lumber from neighboring States would increase the price of the finished material to figures practically prohibitive to the vast majority of citizens; and so far as the furnishing of dwellings was concerned, it would mean, in effect, the return to primitive rudeness and savagery. Such a law would be ridiculous, monstrous and impossible of execution. It would make the State the laughing stock of the country and of the world.

That was the gist of Mr. Watterson's reply, though it was drawn out to greater length, with many digressions in the way of reference to the various branches of business such a law would affect. It would practically be injurious to one and all. Farraday, always prepared for emergencies, hastily compiled a list of articles made wholly or in part of wood. It embraced everything from the paper in which the news was printed to the farmer's cribs and wagons; from the building of a house or barn to the tools of the everyday mechanic. Mr. Watterson laughed heartily as the thing grew under their hands, and Dillingham became positively enthusiastic, as did Mr. Woolworth.

"Couldn't get a word out of him, boys," protested the selfish Farraday, coming forth from the Boss's sanctum, to the great astonishment of his confreres. "Dumb as an oyster. Give you my sacred word."

But the flaring headlines in the Chicago *Courier* the next morning told a different story. It occasioned great excitement in and around the State House. The *Courier,* which never did things by halves, devoted three pages to the matter, publishing a full history of the battle between the rival concerns, with portraits of the principals and pictures of Watterson and Dillingham, Southgate and Dixon, among whom the battle in the political arena lay. The Forestry Bill at once assumed gigantic proportions. For the next two weeks it was made the most important news feature of the State press, the topic of every editorial column and of pictorial satire. There appeared cartoons in the Democratic papers, showing Southgate, a David, doing battle with Watterson, a Goliath, and overcoming him, and the Peoria politician's old favorite, picturing him a valiant St. George engaging the Dragon, Watterson, made its appearance again.

In the midst of this upheaval Watterson remained quiet, giving out but one interview to the assembled representatives of the newspaper world, in which he reiterated his first utterances and with great emphasis denounced the measure as iniquitous, absurd, and harmful to the people. Southgate was less temperate of speech and more frequently took the public into his confidence. The movements of the bosses were closely watched in the days following and widely chronicled. Mr. Watterson called to pay his respects to the Governor on the morning after his arrival; he visited the Capitol while the Legislature was in session, and was wildly cheered by the Republicans on the floor. He received political leaders as they arrived hastily from all parts of the State, eagerly tendering their services in defeating the iniquitous measure; he was visited as time passed by all Republican members of both houses, as well as by many men prominent in State and National politics. But he did nothing, said nothing, made no move that any one could see to gain the end he had avowedly come to seek.

He read the newspapers carefully, however, and noticed with satisfaction how the tide, at first overwhelmingly against him, began to turn in his favor. In fact, the For-

estry Bill, at first little regarded, and then taken up and favored, because he opposed it, did not shine at all under discussion. The country editor, always on guard, was quick to note its obnoxious features. It was against the farmer's interests, against the interest of land-owners, and the welfare of rural residents in general. After a week of heated discussion, it was observed that country papers were solidly against it. City dailies, one after another, fell into line, and less than two weeks after Watterson's advent upon the scene the entire State press, regardless of party, may be said to have been against the measure. Indeed, the unanimity of opposition was wonderful and startling.

It must not be supposed, however, that this opposition was engendered solely by the demerits of the measure in question. By no means. The fact that it was aimed against a trust was sufficient in itself to have gained it many supporters; but the truth was that every editor, whether of city or country, Democratic or Republican, was disgusted with the way the thing had been handled. The Forestry Bill, ostensibly of Democratic origin, drawn and sprung by Dixon, a Democrat, was really of Southgate's manufacture. That renegade gentleman, unable to put it through without assistance, had enlisted a Democrat in its behalf, hoping with the help of Dixon's colleagues and by the grace of Sutherland's corruption fund to carry it to a successful issue; but, taken by surprise by Watterson, he had made the mistake of showing his hand. When this became thoroughly understood a great howl went up, and the Democratic press united with the Republicans in demanding the suppression of this hybrid concoction.

The tremendous pressure brought to bear by these vehicles of public opinion, supplemented by personal pleas, demands and threats of suspicious constituents, could not be withstood. Sutherland was gone, and with him went the huge corruption fund furnished by the men behind the measure; Marblemore and his associates remained inactive, paralyzed, it would seem, by Watterson's masterly movement. With nothing to gain and everything to lose in supporting a measure so unpopular, every member of the legislative body not absolutely committed by word or deed

in the past hastened to get under cover. One after another came out in public, protesting against the bill, and, as a final blow, the Chicago *Courier*, ever in the van with hue and cry raised whenever the public weal was in question, circulated a petition to the Governor against the Forestry Bill, and, receiving many thousands of names, sent a special train carrying the monster appeal to Springfield. And that settled the Forestry Bill forever.

"Dick," said Mr. Watterson, at the end of four weeks of uninterrupted stay at the Capitol, "you're away behind the times. You call yourself a politician. You! Go to the nursery, sir!"

"Oh, laugh away," replied Dick, who indeed had dwelt in a kind of daze of astonishment for some weeks past. "You win hands down. But supposing we hadn't been on the right side?"

"You must always be on the right side, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, serenely. "It's easy—simply avoid the wrong one."

"It is marvelous," Mr. Woolworth declared, shaking his head.

"Not at all," said the boss. "We did nothing, as you have seen. We simply called the attention of the people to the injustice of the law being foisted upon them, and proved to their satisfaction that the measure was dictated, not with a view to their interest and welfare, but as a blind, a subterfuge, to serve the business interests of self-seeking men. The people rose up and declared against it. It was suppressed accordingly. A peaceful revolution, that is all; rather cumbersome and roundabout, but effective, as you have seen. Trust the people, Dick."

Dick grinned rather ruefully, but said nothing.

"Well," continued the big politician, rising, "I'm going home. You promised to come along, John."

"I'm with you."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH MR. SAGAMORE FORMS A RESOLUTION.

"In politics, John," said Mr. Watterson, addressing Mr. Sagamore, as sitting opposite each other in a gorgeous Pullman they sped towards Clarenceburg, "you must, above all things, keep close to the people. The business of politics is one of the most fascinating pursuits in the world if you enter the field from disinterested motives, as it is the most sordid, mean and contemptible if you engage in it for gain. It yields more opportunities for studying men than any other field of human endeavor, and, to my mind, it leads to greater heights. You come into contact with the people, the great common people. You learn to know and to love them, and with this intimate knowledge and sympathy you come to look confidently into the future. We are always advancing, progressing, and by keeping close to the people you advance with them. The politician of today is as different from the politician of ten or twenty years ago as the life of today differs from the life of the last century. When I recall the methods employed by so-called bosses ten years ago, I stand aghast at their utter stupidity, brutality and ignorance. Our friend Dillingham is a survival of the past, but he and his kind will eventually go under before the constantly growing intelligence of the people. Take the present little affair, for example. You have seen how little I did to gain the ends I sought. I simply placed the matter in its true light before the people. They took it up, discussed it in all its bearings, and promptly decided it for all time. Bribery was not resorted to; coercion was not needed; brutal force was not used, and yet the Forestry Bill is dead and buried. The people simply expressed their will, and their representatives, regardless of party, hastened to get under cover. It was rather a roundabout way, I own, but the best under our present system of government. Our ends have been gained, our

party has won great credit, and this credit will in the approaching campaign be of great assistance to us."

He paused as the train drew up and came to a standstill beside a small country station, amid cries and shouts and a general commotion that for a moment was quite unaccountable in that quiet district.

"What's up?" said the politician, looking out.

A crowd of farmers were gathered upon the platform. Mr. Watterson gradually became aware that all eyes were being focused upon his window. He drew back quickly, glancing in some astonishment at his companion. Sagamore smiled, and quickly threw open the window.

"Show yourself, Scott," he said, "your coming has been flashed along the line and they're gathered to see you."

Such, indeed, seemed to be the case. They came crowding around the window with great eagerness, a hundred or more bearded farmers, who cheered at sight of him and hoarsely bellowed his name.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

Mr. Watterson, smiling broadly, put out his hand to those nearest him.

"What is it, men?" he asked. "What's up?"

"Hurray for Watterson," was the answer, "our next Governor."

Mr. Watterson laughed. Cries of "Speech, speech," came from all sides. He shook his head.

"You knocked the Forestry Bill on the head, didn't you?" cried one, chuckling in his beard. "We'd made up our minds to march to the Capitol in a body, if it hadn't been withdrawn."

"It was a bad measure," replied the boss, smiling.

The bell rang out in warning, and slowly the train started. The farmers waved their hats in a parting salute and cheered their idol's name.

"Watterson! Watterson!" And with the name vibrating on the air the train went rushing homeward.

"Our next Governor," said Sagamore, thoughtfully. "It will come to that, Scott."

"No," said Scott, shaking his head. "Our next Governor will, I hope, be Governor Sagamore."

"But if the people want you?"

"They will respect my wishes."

"Scott, your place is in the United States Senate," cried Sagamore. "If we win, will you let your name be put forward?"

"Yes. Nightingale retires voluntarily, and, as it seems to be the general wish of my friends, I shall stand for the vacant seat. You shall have your chance, John. You are very strong with the rank and file of the party, and that is the main thing. Dillingham and the rest of the leaders, who, as you doubtless know, are opposed to you, will be obliged to yield to popular demand."

Sagamore nodded gravely. He was a tall, slender man of thirty-eight, with serious gray eyes, deep set beneath bushy black brows, and a forehead of ample dimensions. His smooth-shaven face as a whole expressed firmness and rugged self-reliance. It was the face of a fighter, square-jawed and sharply outlined, with pale, thin, firmly compressed lips and a large aquiline nose, the whole overcast with a leathery brown complexion. His hair of an auburn hue, was thin, especially at the temples, which shone bald and white above the bronzed jaws. He was quietly dressed, rather shabby, indeed, but neat withal and in good taste. He was Mr. Watterson's favorite among the younger politicians of the State; a fine orator, full of native eloquence and fire, brainy and far-sighted, but hot-tempered and imperious. He was a bachelor, and rather shy and retiring of disposition, it was said. His fierce stand against the Hutchison Bill when a member of the Illinois State Legislature had endeared him to the people. He made an astonishingly brilliant fight, though a losing one, for the Hutchison Bill was passed in his teeth and made a law. His stand, however, had served to bring him into public favor, and he was now generally regarded as the strongest gubernatorial candidate of the Republican party. The man was the despair of the bosses of the Dillingham stripe. They hated and feared him. He was thoroughly and completely independent. A lawyer by profession, he made

his residence in Jacksonville, where he had won his first nomination to the Legislature at twenty-eight in one of the frequent factional fights within the organization, in which Mr. Watterson never mingled, and which, under that astute leader's supervision, were never permitted to affect the organization as a whole. His first act when elected was to publicly announce his unalterable independence of the organization. Mr. Watterson liked him from the start. The young man's headstrong opposition pleased the big boss; his brilliant and winning fight won the politician's admiration. He watched over the young man, all unknown to the latter, with patient care. He forced Sagamore's second nomination upon the local leader, and at the close of his second term in the State Capitol he proffered him the Congressional nomination of his district. They had by this time become strong friends and co-workers. Sagamore went to Washington, and there distinguished himself signally, reflecting honor upon his State and credit upon the organization, of which he was now a member, albeit a headstrong and rebellious supporter. Mr. Sagamore had frequently visited his political chief at Clarenceburg, though as it happened his visits had all been on political business. He was now for the first time going there as Mr. Watterson's guest.

"Without undue egotism I may say that as a politician I am far in advance of Dillingham," continued Mr. Watterson, recurring after some aimless talk to the first subject, "and yet there is no distinction drawn between us by the press. We are bosses, they maintain, and as such equally vile. But, John, the people of this State know better. I have kept close to them throughout my career, and in spite of all the newspapers say of me they believe in me, because they know me. You are opposed to organization in politics, although you see its good effects all around you. Organization enables us to put good men to the front and keep them there. Look at Millburn of Chicago. Look at Spencefield of Springfield, Gilmore of Cairo and Martindale of Galesburg. Look at Hitchcock, Gorman, Dwyer and others. Do they not worthily represent our State at Washington? Look at our legislators. They are the very best men

available in the State. It is true that we have black sheep, but they are fast being eliminated as the organization grows more and more perfect. The organization encourages honest effort; it discourages dishonesty, and punishes treachery in its members by annihilation. You know that, John. The debating clubs which I established in country districts have been the means of bringing many young men of extraordinary merit to my attention. These men are taken up and encouraged to enter public life. They must fight their own way, of course, and outstrip local competitors, but that serves to make men and fighters of them. They know that they will be dropped at once, irrevocably, the moment they show evidence of roguery. They know further that honesty will be rewarded, and so we get the best among men in the State. Where does your objection then lie, John?"

"It lies in the enormous power for evil given into one man's hand," said Sagamore, emphatically. "You, Scott, work for the common good; you strive to bring out the best that is in man. It is your pride to have the representatives of this State pointed out at the nation's Capitol as the leaders of the Union. But, Scott, supposing Southgate —Dillingham—Summerville—Brockington, or any one of a score of men whom I could name, whose evil tendencies are in a measure curbed through fear of you—supposing any one of them, I say, was placed in your position tomorrow? What a tremendous power for evil he would wield."

"The people would not tolerate dishonesty in him nor in his organization," said Mr. Watterson, forcefully. "I tell you, voters are not what they once were. They have awakened to their power. They demand clean, honest men for office, and the leader who would hold his supremacy must yield to their wishes. With honest men in office, the leader, however dishonest personally, is helpless. A leader nowadays must not only be trusted by the people at large, but by his political associates as well, and if he were dishonest they could not trust him. Dissensions would inevitably ensue and disruption result if a politician of the old stripe were placed at the head of any organization.

The boss of the future must let the people rule through him, as you have seen."

"Do you think," asked Mr. Sagamore, "that Dillingham will join forces with Southgate, as is rumored?"

"No; that is all nonsense; false reports started by the enemy."

"I don't know," said Sagamore, thoughtfully. "I don't trust him. He's too shifty by half."

But Mr. Watterson shook his head emphatically. He had every confidence in his friend.

At every station along the line they were met by throngs of country people, gathered to catch a passing glimpse of Watterson. They cheered him uproariously, and shouted his name in enthusiastic acclaim.

"Their newspapers have stirred them up," said Mr. Watterson, smiling. "Ah! these country editors! Give me their support, and you may have all the metropolitan organs in existence."

At Clarenceburg there was again a great concourse of people—his townsmen—at sight of whom the big boss's eyes sparkled joyously.

"It is good to get home," he said, stepping off the train and holding out both hands in warm greeting to those nearest him. Sherman, who was in the crowd, came to meet his magnificent uncle with such impetuous ardor that Mr. Watterson for a moment thought himself in for a sound hugging, but the young man only grasped his hands and pressed them affectionately.

"Why, he's towering above you," said Sagamore, shaking hands with the smiling boy.

"Towering above me," cried Mr. Watterson, drawing the young man's arm fondly through his own, "why, he's a giant, John; a giant mentally and physically! You should hear the wordy battles we engage in, eh, Sherman? Ah, I'll engage the rogue has been priming himself during these weeks. He's a socialist, John, a follower in the footsteps of Henry George the Great—that is, if he hasn't set up some new idol in my absence. Yes, a socialist masquerading as a Democrat. He declares that he will cast his first ballot against us, John, this fall."

They were walking towards the square three abreast, with Sherman in the middle. The boy was laughing and protesting against his uncle's warm praises.

"He ought to be your son, Scott," said Sagamore.

"I'm glad he is not," said Mr. Watterson, smiling, "and so is he; ask him, John."

"Indeed I am," said Sherman, wtih amazing earnestness. "Not his actual son, you know, Mr. Sagamore."

"Why, that is very strange," said Mr. Sagamore, regarding his laughing friends in astonishment.

"This, Sadie," said Mr. Watterson, introducing his friend, "is Mr. Sagamore, a friend who has promised to visit me, many times, these half dozen years."

"Winfield's friends," said Aunt Sadie, looking shyly at the stranger, "are ten thousand million times welcome."

Then she blushed at what in her calmer moments she considered a silly expression, but Mr. Sagamore thought that he had never received so cordial a greeting before.

"But where is Myrtle?" said Mr. Watterson, looking around.

She came in at the moment and, unaware of the stranger's presence, she approached her father, smiling and blushing with pleasure.

"Ah, Papa, four whole weeks!" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck. "Four whole weeks, you cruel, Papa."

Then she paused, coloring deeply. Her eyes had fallen upon Mr. Sagamore, and with an arm still embracing her father's neck, she turned to him with a gentle inclination of the head.

"Mr. Sagamore," said Mr. Watterson, proudly, "this is my daughter. Mr. Sagamore, my friend, darling."

Myrtle smiled, and bowed in graceful welcome.

"Papa's real friends are so few," she said, "that we rarely have the happiness of entertaining one."

"Mr. Watterson has more real friends than he knows," replied Mr. Sagamore.

"My gracious!" said Aunt Sadie, who had precipitately retreated before so formidable a visitor, and now stood with

her boy in the background. "Wasn't that prettily said? The dear sweet child!"

"So now we are all together again," said Mr. Watterson, genially. "I give you notice, John, that you are to consider yourself one of the family. You are so thoroughly a politician, John," continued Mr. Watterson, seating himself, after seeing his guest comfortably settled in an easy-chair, "that you love to spend even your leisure moments in political discussion. You can make your visit with us thoroughly enjoyable then, for we are all politicians with the exception of Sadie, my sister, who scorns politics and abhors politicians——"

"Really, Winfield," protested Aunt Sadie, turning her horrified eyes upon Mr. Sagamore in mute supplication.

"Who scorns politics and abhors politicians," repeated Mr. Watterson, with such resolute firmness that Aunt Sadie could only pat her hair and gaze beseechingly around. "We, my daughter, Sherman and myself are fairly bristling with arguments, ready at any moment to engage in dispute. You know me, John, I am at all times prepared for your assaults. Sherman is bubbling over with ardor, his mind is full of rare ideas, which he will defend to the last gasp. As for my daughter—"

"Please, Papa," said Myrtle, squeezing his arm.

"I already number myself among Miss Watterson's most devoted admirers," said Mr. Sagamore. "I have been following your writings for some months," he continued, addressing the beaming girl, "they have interested me very much. The cause you so ably advocate is a noble one."

Myrtle blushed with delight at praise so sweet, coming from a man so well known and highly esteemed. And like an ardent enthusiast who sees a recruit in every passing person she saw the great possibilities to her cause in converting a man of Mr. Sagamore's political importance. But she could not in modesty reply to a commendation so direct and personal, and so the subject was allowed to lapse for the time being.

Visitors began dropping in. First and foremost was Mr. Marblemore, who laughed heartily over his defeat, and the uproar his political subterfuge had occasioned.

"That comes of your entering politics, Andrew," said Mr. Watterson, gravely. "Stick to business and business methods."

"I guess you are right, Winfield," said the banker, good-naturedly, "though my scheme wasn't a bad one, eh? If I had only been politician enough to work it. The fight is on now in earnest, but we'll probably come to some understanding before long."

Mr. Thompson called, and Judge Hammersmith, General Hamilton too, and many other prominent men of the city. Mr. Sagamore received a good deal of attention as the rising star on the political firmament.

The visitors gone they sat gayly down to supper. Mr. Sagamore was no conversationalist, but a good listener. He never wearied of observing Myrtle and of listening to that young lady's discourse. She talked of many things and talked well of all of them, but she became most enthusiastic and eloquent when later, in the parlor, the young politician brought the conversation to bear upon the Cause in which she was so deeply interested. He asked, if in her opinion, the giving of the suffrage to women would tend towards the purification of politics.

"I do believe so," Myrtle replied, "but I am not worrying about it. The purification of politics is wholly a matter of evolution. We do not ask for the ballot in order that we may purify politics. We demand the suffrage as our right. We are subject to the same laws as men. We pay taxes on property at an equal rate; we bear the expenses of government—why should we not have a voice in it? Purification of politics will work itself out in time. Our coming would, I believe, hasten it, but it is inevitable. Our leading politicians throughout the country are men of higher intellectual level than were those of twenty years ago, and their methods are, I believe, more honest and open. Our lawmakers listen now very attentively to the popular voice. Public opinion is coming to rule more and more every day. Yes, purity in politics is inevitable, and we women wish to work side by side with you towards that end. It means as much to us as to you. Our interests are identical. Women are entering into all the walks of life which were formerly

monopolized by men. They are forced there by modern conditions. As we must share your trials, your hardships and your responsibilities we should be permitted to share your political privileges and advantages. I do not wish to adopt masculine customs, masculine habits, masculine manners nor dress. I do not want to be strong enough to do your work, but I want to help you in it. I do not want to lead you, nor do I propose to follow. I do not want to go to war—I want to prevent war; I do not wish to work against men, but with them. I do so much want to help my father, my brother, my husband, but in doing so I want to be considered as a factor in their work and not looked down upon as a nonentity. It is humiliating to be kept in a state of subjection when I can think as clearly, reason as logically, speak as sensibly and act as resolutely as my brother. I am not masculine for all that, am I?"

"By no means," replied Mr. Sagamore, drawing in a deep breath of admiration as he sat watching her countenance in a glow of animation.

"It is the natural desire of a reasoning human being. We are told that we are superior creatures, far, far above gross politics and all that goes with the practice of government, but that is manifestly an absurd statement, and those who most often quote it are the very ones who look down upon us as inferior creatures standing between men and children, but nearer, much nearer children. 'Be content,' they say, 'to sit idly with your hands in your lap while we look after your wants and let us regulate your life for you.' This was to be tolerated in the past, when woman's work was confined strictly to the home, but modern conditions have forced her out into the world where she must fight the battle of life side by side with man. They are subject to the same iron-clad rules as their brethren—indeed they are placed at a disadvantage, for much more is expected of them and the remuneration is considerably lower. Deprived of the ballot they have no means of redressing their grievances. What lawmaker will interest himself in the wrongs of workers who cannot vote? There is no advancement to be gained through them, and little glory. Men, on the contrary, being voters, are considered important factors to

political success, and they have in consequence champions in plenty. Oh dear! Oh dear!"

She ended as usual with tears of woe in her eyes, which she vainly tried to laugh away. Mr. Sagamore was deeply impressed and not a little moved by her earnestness. He followed her with his eyes as she moved about the room, the embodiment of womanly grace and sweetness. He saw her laughing gayly with Aunt Sadie, talking gravely with her father, and listening with a smiling face to the chatter of various girl visitors, and replying to them with merry bursts of laughter. Each mood suited her, he thought. She was sweet and womanly always, whether grave or gay, sitting in pensive silence or engaged in animated conversation. Upon first beholding her he had thought her very beautiful, but seeing her later sitting between Rosie and Clara he began to think differently. Clara's full cheeks and rich coloring quite put to shame Myrtle's thin paleness, and Rosie's soft appealing prettiness threw her thoughtful gravity into the severest possible contrast. No, she was not strictly speaking beautiful. He acknowledged this with a curious throb of pleasure in the fact. Her face was, however, very sweet in its purity of outline and gentleness of expression, implying strength at once and grave reserve.

"No," he thought, "she is not beautiful in the full sense of the word, but how infinitely superior to mere beauty is the expression of her face! Intelligent she is above most women, modest beyond words to express; loving—how sweetly she came to meet her father! Merry—her laughter mingles gayly with that of those chatterboxes; with a mind full of brilliant thoughts and a heart overflowing with love and sympathy for her sister woman. God! What a wife she would be! What a wife for an ambitious man! John, John, be careful!

He was a bachelor, but like most bachelors most willing to change his state if he could but find the right woman. He found himself weighing his chances in a possible effort to win this young woman. He was much older in years than she; he was poor, he was not handsome. But to offset these drawbacks he was ambitious, a man of the first importance in the politics of his State, with a future bright

with promise and imbued with an iron determination to win the very highest political honors in the land. God! how she would adorn that post toward which he aspired! The first lady in the land! She would be it in fact as well as in name. In an instant his resolution was taken. She was not a girl, he fancied, to value youth and personal beauty in a husband as against earnestness of purpose and boundless ambition.

From the moment that he began to picture her as his future wife her every word and look and movement became of absorbing interest to him. Feeding his fancy with thoughts of her, his heart softened and expanded, and her image was indelibly impressed upon it. A bright halo began to form itself about her head; her cause assumed a newer aspect, her unselfish devotion to it glorified her in his eyes. He was in love. His passion rose with every passing moment. Imagination is a strange thing. It distinguishes men from brutes.

He wondered, with a feeling of pain, if she had a lover. He did not once think of Sherman. His very nearness to her put the boy out of his mind. Even when later, sitting by her side, the lad's eager voice came to them, and he saw her eyes soften and become tender at the sound, he did not think of him in connection with her. Seeing that she had left her father's side and was sitting alone, he had come to her, and had immediately brought the talk to bear on her favorite topic.

"Suffrage is but an item in woman's onward march toward emancipation, a most important item to be sure," she was saying, when Sherman's eager voice interrupted her. He was sitting beside his smiling uncle, engaged in eager argument.

"But Uncle, land should be as free as air and water. In condemning this man simply for preaching this doctrine you do not disprove his theories nor explain in what way they are false. Now, think of the good that might be derived from them. Putting aside the city man entirely, let us come to your beloved farmer. A young man at twenty buys a small farm of a hundred and sixty acres, say—buys it on credit under a mortgage. How long will it take him to

pay for that farm? Why, a lifetime, Uncle. Yes. He works a lifetime to pay for that which he ought to have simply for the asking. Now, supposing the government owned the land. All this man would have to do would be to go to the county clerk and rent the land of the government, agreeing to pay such and such rent—or tax—per acre, his personal property to remain untaxable. Don't you see, Uncle? The man wouldn't be spending his life paying for his farm. He'd pay his taxes and live comfortably, rear his children decently, and when he was gathered to his fathers his son could rent the land of the State and use it in the same way. Why—"

But just here Sherman became aware of the silence that had fallen upon the room, and he paused abashed, looking around in some indignation at his smiling audience.

Mr. Sagamore turned with a smile to Myrtle. She was gazing straight at Sherman. Her eyes were moist in their deep tenderness, and her lips and chin trembled with emotion.

"You see, Mr. Sagamore," she said, smiling a little sadly, "we all have our hobbies. Mine you know—Papa's too. Sherman's at the moment is Single Tax. A few weeks ago," she added, becoming suddenly merry, "it was the Initiative and Referendum, then Free Trade, then the proper ratio of coinage; now it is Single Tax. What it will be next week no one can tell, least of all himself."

"He has a very kind heart that boy," said Mr. Sagamore.

Myrtle nodded with a brightening of countenance wonderful to behold. She was thinking that that heart was in her keeping, and she gloried in the fact.

"Have you a hobby, Mr. Sagamore?" she asked, demurely.

"A hobby?" he said, thoughtfully. "Yes, I believe so. My hobby—if what is a settled purpose may be called a hobby," he said, speaking very slowly and gravely, "is to become President of the United States."

She looked at him with very large eyes of wonder, and noting his ample brow, his deep grave eyes and resolute mouth, she said, gravely:

"I believe you will attain your ambition, Mr. Sagamore."

He flushed to the hair, gratified beyond all expression and passing a big, knotty hand across his brow, he rose in a jerky fashion that characterized him in moments of excitement.

"Let us join the visionary," he said, smiling; "I am eager to hear him expound his theories."

"Indeed they are well worth listening to and heeding, Mr. Sagamore," Myrtle replied, somewhat resenting his smile of superiority. "Visions they may be now, but you must remember that to-day's realities were the visions of long ago. So the visions of to-day will be realized some time."

Mr. Sagamore raised his brows, but said nothing. Sherman was still arguing eloquently, and Mr. Watterson listening with a smiling countenance when the politician joined them with Myrtle.

"Will you tell me, Sherman," said Mr. Sagamore, gravely, "just what is wrong in our social system?"

"It is all wrong, sir—all," replied Sherman, with a comprehensive wave of his hand.

"No half measures here!" cried Mr. Watterson, chuckling deeply.

"Explain," said Mr. Sagamore.

"The foundation is wrong—the system upon which the entire social fabric is reared. The earth—the soil which, like the air we breathe, is God's free gift to man, and like air and water should be free to all, is parceled out, appropriated by the most powerful—that is to say, the most cunning and unscrupulous. This world was made for all equally and should be equally enjoyed by all. We came naked into this world; we leave it as we came, with empty hands. All that is here was placed here by an all-wise Providence for the common use; but society in its formation chose Might as its standard, and that standard has prevailed through all the ages. He who was the most powerful was hailed as the greatest; he appropriated to his use, and the use of his favorites, the soil that of right belonged to all, and the common people were made subject to this favorite

class. As time passed and the people grew in intelligence they came more and more to realize their wrongs. They rebelled, not against the fundamental wrong, but against one or another of the thousand and one grievances growing out of the original usurpation. Again and again they rose, and at the cost of life and blood wrested their liberties one by one from their reluctant tyrants. But they did not go deep enough. The dominant class continued in possession of the soil—the source of all life and being, and all that was granted the people did not materially improve their condition, because what was given with one hand was taken away with the other—not openly, perhaps, but none the less inevitably. And so, in spite of certain abstract liberties gained through the centuries, the condition of the people remains the same, and will continue so as long as the system continues, as now to be fundamentally the same as that which prevailed in feudal times."

"An admirable exposition," quoth Mr. Sagamore, "and the remedy for all this?"

"The remedy lies in Socialism," said Sherman, forcefully. "There should be no such thing as private ownership of land. The government—that is to say, the people collectively, should own the soil. And some day it will be so. This thing cannot last—poverty on one side of the street, wealth and waste on the other; here a millionaire and there a tramp. Here is a thing that will illustrate in little the enormity of this crime—private ownership of land. Dozens of men living right here in Clarenceburg, enjoying the best of everything, never do a stroke of work, nor in any way contribute towards the well-being of society. You know them, Uncle! They are land owners. They inherited from their parents or grandparents several hundreds of acres of land, which cost the original owners practically nothing, and now they can live in luxury and idleness, while out on the farms the actual tillers of the soil labor and sweat and, in many instances, deny themselves and deprive their wives and children of the commonest pleasures of life in order to rake and scrape together the rent demanded by their landlords for the use of the soil. And this is true of the entire State—of practically every State

in the Middle West. The actual farmers, the men who plow and sow and reap are renters, tenants, the land owners live in cities and towns, collect their rents and enjoy life at the expense of the toilers. In what way do these conditions differ from those that prevailed in Europe a hundred—three hundred—a thousand years ago?"

"Oh, things are not as bad as all that, my lad," said Mr. Watterson, shaking his head deprecatingly. "Hundreds of our farmers own their own farms and farm them."

"Granted, Uncle, but for every hundred owning the land they farm I'll show you a thousand renters; and even these land-owning farmers, for the most part, are only nominal owners of their farms. What with mortgages, debts, and so forth, most of them are in the power of bankers and money sharps generally. No, sir; when a farmer nowadays has succeeded in clearing his farm of all incumbrances, he quits the hard life, rents out his land and moves to town. The competition among landless farmers is so keen that the land owners can make more money renting out their land than in tilling it. And this competition is becoming more and more keen every year, and but for the outlet afforded these surplus farmers by the unsettled West conditions would be very much worse. As it is rents are steadily rising. Ten years ago the landlord was contented with a one-third share of the year's crop; five years ago his demand had risen to two-fifths, while now one-half of all is the rule with an additional tax of five, six or seven dollars per acre for pasture land. What things will come to when the West is settled to the hilt I shudder to think."

"And yet we read of enormous crops everywhere, and the unexampled prosperity of the farmer," mused Mr. Sagamore.

"Those calculations are based upon the enormous earnings of the grain-carrying railroads purely, which exact their tribute, no matter what the market price of grain may be. Because crops are large this year it does not follow that the farmer has more money in his jeans than he had last year when the yield was slim. When crops are large prices drop to zero; when prices are high crops are small. The farmer's profit is likely to be pretty much the same one

year with another; for not only is he subject to Nature's whims, but there is besides the overshadowing bane of the wheat pit, where any brainless little idiot who wouldn't know a field of growing wheat from a section of turnips, if he has the requisite nerve, can manipulate prices until even the law of supply and demand is put out of joint. I was talking with old Barley only this morning—you know him, Uncle—John Barleycorn, the biggest farmer in Clarence county?"

"One of my old comrades in arms," assented the big man.

"He has a farm out here near Logan's Point—thirty-five hundred acres, all under cultivation. He had out a thousand acres of corn this year, just exactly the same as last; but whereas last year he raised only forty-five thousand bushels in all, this year's crop amounted to nearly ninety thousand bushels. But, while last year's corn brought seventy-five cents a bushel, this year's crop brought him in only seventeen cents. Now, figure that out and see which was Barley's more prosperous year. Of course, the railroad carrying this grain charged exactly the same price as last year, and the crops being double what they were a year ago their earnings were accordingly doubled. Figuring Barley's prosperity on the basis of the railroad's earnings this year as compared with last it would be easy to show that the farmer had a great deal to be thankful for—a state of mind at which old Barley has not yet arrived. Now, supposing Barley were a tenant of another man's land, as eight out of ten farmers in this county are. For the use of this corn land he would have had to give forty-five thousand bushels of this crop of ninety thousand bushels to the owner of the land as rent before he could even begin to figure on recovering his running expenses—to say nothing of profits which at seventeen cents a bushel would be—what? A mass of debts! Nothing more."

"And yet, Sherman, this same Barley twenty-five years ago hadn't a dollar," observed Mr. Watterson, "and now he owns thirty-five hundred acres of the richest land in the county—worth a hundred dollars an acre I should say, every foot of it."

"And farms it, too, it seems," interposed Mr. Sagamore, dryly.

"Just so," Sherman replied, in no wise daunted; "but any one knowing Barley knows exactly why he has risen so high above his fellows. In any other walk of life he would have done equally well. In finance, had he entered that field, this man, I am convinced, would have put the most cunning and audacious to rout. He didn't make his money farming, Uncle, and you know it. His land has been a kind of base of operations to him. That is all. He is a natural born trader. For twenty years he has scoured these prairies, covering all of ten counties, buying up hogs, cattle, horses and sheep, not merely by the carload, but by the train, shipping them to Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, wherever he could find the best market. He often sold his shipments at a loss, but far more often at an enormous profit. That's how Barley made his pile, and not in farming. Now that he has retired from active trading and is devoting himself to farming exclusively he complains that his land yields him but a bare living."

"Old Barley's stories are to be taken with a large grain of salt, my son," said Mr. Watterson, laughing.

"But Sherman is right, Papa, in his main contention, I am sure," Myrtle said combatively. "Don't you think so, Mr. Sagamore?"

"No, I do not agree with him," Mr. Sagamore replied, decisively. "Socialism is a dream impossible of realization."

Which unequivocal declaration was taken as a challenge by Sherman, who forthwith took up the gage of battle, and with considerable force and fire defended his beloved theories. In the discussion that followed the young man succeeded more than once in overwhelming his adversary with confusion. Mr. Sagamore not only was slow of thought and ponderous in delivery as compared with Sherman, but he was by temperament unfitted for wordy battling in which this ardent young socialist delighted. Sherman, if less deep, was more brilliant and gifted with a torrential eloquence that swept all before it. He was deeply read in his subject moreover and fairly bristling with arguments to which Mr. Sagamore had nothing whatever to oppose, save

the stock phrases which for generations have been employed by obstructionists of every kind and calibre. The politician, however, through it all, retained that tone of calm superiority which distinguishes the self-sufficient on all occasions, treating the eager contentions of our young enthusiast with a good-natured contempt that irritated Myrtle deeply. She herself had never taken the boy seriously, and in their daily intercourse her demeanor partook much of that same smiling tolerance which she now resented in Mr. Sagamore. But, nevertheless, she was angered by this attitude in him. She followed with interest the discussion, and every now and then joined in with a word in support of Sherman. Mr. Watterson sat in deep delight listening to it all. Nothing ever came of such discussion of course. Nobody ever was convinced of the error of his views, nor induced to modify or alter in the slightest degree his convictions or his principles. Still and all it was a delightful pastime, a sort of intellectual stimulant in which men of mind could find both pleasure and profit.

The hour was late when the party broke up. Mr. Sagamore, shaking Sherman by the hand in parting for the night, declared himself vanquished for that time; but promised on some future occasion to renew the discussion, when he assured the young man he would be better prepared to meet his onslaughts.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONTAINING VARIOUS MATTERS.

Mr. Sagamore's visit lasted ten days, during which he found many opportunities of talking with Myrtle, of observing and studying the girl in the reality of her home-life, and the more he saw of her the more earnest and resolute his purpose became. He took a deep interest in her work, but the interest was inspired solely by the brave little laborer. It was a pleasure to arouse her spirit, to listen to her animated discussion. She was at all times sweet and kind and gentle and very quiet, but when defending or expounding the glories of her Cause, she absolutely glowed with enthusiasm. He liked to see her beautiful eyes flash, and the confidential tone she fell into at such times delighted him beyond measure. He thought that he came nearer to her heart at these moments, and so he constantly led her on to talk of her Cause. But in so doing he, without realizing the fact, irreparably injured his own cause. In conversing with him on that subject alone Myrtle came to think of him in no other light save that of a possible powerful ally in furthering the Cause she so warmly espoused. He came to be connected in her mind with it, never to be thought of apart from it. She was deeply grateful for his interest, but she thought this interest only natural to anyone who would earnestly look into and study the subject. It never occurred to her to fancy that the man was interested in her personality rather than in the Cause. She thought not of him in that light. She saw him through the Cause as he saw the Cause through her. Aside from the Cause he was to her but a man to be cherished as her father's friend, a rising man indeed, earnest, honest, keen and scholarly, but nothing more than her father's friend; and aside from her the Cause to him was monumental nonsense. He thought she was mistaken but adorable in her error, and he dreamed of turning her earnest devotion into a different channel—into furthering her husband's ambition.

As time passed he came to speak more and more of himself, of his views, ideals and ambitions, but always of his own accord. She never sought to draw him out, but selfishly thought only of what use he might be to her and the Cause.

With Sherman, on the other hand, she never spoke of herself or of her work, but always of him, leading him on to talk of himself and of his future plans, to all of which she listened with the deepest tenderness, her soft eyes fixed in loving admiration on his countenance, and her hands were more often than not clasping his. Sherman was not deep; he was not a thinker by any means. He was an earnest, ardent, shallow-pated youngster, thoroughly honest and gifted with a vivid imagination which sent him wandering from one thing to another, espousing with zeal and enthusiasm anything that momentarily caught his fancy, but remaining faithful to none. He was like rich red wine to Myrtle. Hearing his eager footsteps without she would throw aside her pen and come to him with outstretched hands, a picture of joy and pride and loving tenderness. His touch, his glance, the tones of his merry voice never failed to revive her often drooping spirits. There was no work, no thinking possible with Sherman about.

"Come along, sweetheart," he would say, and she would put on her hat obediently and go with him, strolling into the country through the endless prairies a silent and happy girl, while he talked and laughed and sang and whistled like a truant schoolboy. How devoted he was to her! How thoughtful and tender and attentive! Never had maiden a more chivalrous lover. He absolutely worshipped her, and in his unceasing admiration she found unending joy and happiness. She had her moments of depression, her hours of utter discouragement, but these periods were made sweet by her lover's devotion. Her pen lay idle sometimes for days, but those days were spent with Sherman, and when they were passed she took up her labors with renewed courage and ardor.

It is a mistake to suppose that all women want to look up to a husband as to a superior. A woman such as Myrtle will tolerate no superiority of mind in a husband. She

liked earnest intellectual men as friends and companions, but she passionately loved Sherman, merry-hearted, hair-brained addlepated Sherman, who was as open and frank as the day and as pure in thought and word and deed as a child. With her heart thus full to overflowing the thought never occurred to her in her selfish happiness that this grave middle-aged politician who was spoken of as the coming Governor of Illinois and whose professed ambition it was to become President of the United States could entertain thoughts of her, other than those inspired by their mutual interest in the Cause. She hoped earnestly to gain this forceful man as a co-worker, but she did not for one moment think of linking herself with his ambitious future.

"I will not be able to come again," he told her in parting, "until late in August—or more probably in early September. All indications point to a strong fight within the organization. It is rumored that Dillingham is about to desert us and join with Southgate, and I am inclined to accept the rumor as fact. Mr. Watterson, I know, does not express any uneasiness, but he is always serene because he has a firm conviction that right will prevail in the end. He has such supreme confidence in the people that he is content to wait. There will, I believe, be a strong effort made to crush him, and if Dillingham really joins forces with Southgate, the effort will, I fear, prove successful. A man in my position must remain neutral."

"I should think that there would be no question of neutrality in your mind," said Myrtle, energetically. "You must side with Papa—"

"Yes, of course. I mean in appearance only. You do not understand these matters."

Myrtle frowned. His tone of toleration jarred upon her, and his smile of superiority wounded her deeply.

"Mr. Watterson thinks it best that I remain in the background until after the Convention. We shall, of course, be in constant communication, and whatever happens on the surface you must always believe me to be your father's friend—and yours. Will you?"

"Yes, I shall always believe so, Mr. Sagamore."

"Besides, you will write to me regarding your work?"

he continued, "and permit me to write to you? There is yet much for me to learn, and it is just possible that I may be of some assistance to you."

"Yes, yes, I will write," said Myrtle, eagerly. "If you could only have a clause inserted in the Republican platform, Mr. Sagamore, favoring woman's suffrage, it would serve to focus the public eye upon the question as nothing else would."

"I will do my best. I need hardly tell you of the one man who is all-powerful."

"I know, I know," said Myrtle, "but I cannot ask Papa. I could never make you understand I know, but I cannot bring myself to ask my honored father to do anything of which he does not wholly and fully approve. It would pain him to refuse me, and I cannot talk to him and argue with him as I can with another man. And besides, Mr. Sagamore, I do not want anything done for my sake, but for the sake of the truth and the justice of the Cause. Papa could not look at the Cause except through me, while you, Mr. Sagamore, who regard me merely as the daughter of your friend—"

"Not so, not so," said Mr. Sagamore, hurriedly, "however," he added quickly, seeing her eyes widening in astonishment, "I will see what can be done. I will talk it over with various influential men, my political friends and associates. Good-bye, Miss Watterson. Think of me kindly sometimes."

Myrtle returned joyfully to her work, resolved to appeal to her father only as a last resort. She spoke to him of her Club. It was gaining strength daily, she said, and its prospect of becoming a lasting institution were very bright, but the outlook in respect to her Cause was rather discouraging.

"The girls, with but few exceptions, take no interest in the Cause for which the Club was primarily founded," she said, "they attend the meetings regularly, but they do not care to go into the subjects of study very deeply. They were most enthusiastic in fitting up the gymnasium and library, but they have come to regard the rooms as a lounging place merely. They are already talking of amateur

theatricals and evening entertainments. Besides, Papa," continued Myrtle, ruefully, "I cannot enforce the rules against gossiping. The poor dears have absolutely nothing to talk about save their neighbors and acquaintances, and in talking of them, petty jealousies and envious feelings will invariably crop up. Now, I want to make the meetings as interesting and enjoyable as possible, and if I become stern and strict they will stay away. Oh dear, it is difficult. The gigantic organization that I dreamed of has already gone a glimmering. I have come to rely upon my pen and upon my lectures more than upon active organization."

"You must weed out the chatterboxes, Myrtle," said her father, sagely.

"But Papa, I want to keep them. I want to make them earnest working members instead of chatterboxes. The serious-minded woman I can win with my pen; I must convert the others by means of personal intercourse."

"A very hard task, my dear," said Mr. Watterson, sympathetically.

"Yes, Papa, harder than I thought," replied Myrtle, sadly. "You see, Papa, I cannot blame a sweet little thing like Rosie, or a bright, mischievous girl like Fanny, or a loving, childish girl like Daisy—I cannot blame them for not taking a deep and lasting interest in a subject so dry. They are such thoughtless little dears that I haven't the heart to scold them. They would rather laugh and sing and dance than sit there and listen to me and to others. They do not mean to be thoughtless. Indeed, they try hard to take their minds off their dresses and their lovers long enough to try to understand what I am talking about, but they can't. They are like children, very sweet and lovable but without thought or care."

"Do you think then, my dear," hinted her father, gently, "that little Rosie who is so sweet and Fanny who is so mischievous, and Daisy who is so childlike, ought to have the ballot—that they are fit to exercise the suffrage if it were granted them? They do not understand, nor care to understand what it is all about."

"Oh, Papa, if you are so unfair, what must other men be?" cried Myrtle, in despair. "Does every man that has

the ballot understand or care to understand the immense importance of the thing he carelessly owns? I have seen men, God help me, I have seen them so sodden—but it is useless to talk of it. Give my three little friends the ballot and I'll warrant they will soon care to understand its purpose and its value."

"I wish you success, Myrtle."

She kissed him tenderly. "I know you do, Papa, because it is Myrtle, your daughter, whom you love."

Sherman, too, sought an early opportunity to confer with his uncle. He wanted to quit the Chronicle, and go into the Works under Mr. Bennett, whose place he ultimately hoped to fill.

"The paper is declining all the time," he said, "and I am sure my going would relieve the General. He is very peculiar, Uncle, as you know, and very obstinate. He does not strive for patronage at all, having a theory born of long experience that prosperity will come in full measure to him who deserves it. He does not understand modern business methods. He does not care to adopt modern means. If a subscriber fails to renew his subscription to the day he will strike him off the list instantly, without making allowance for thoughtlessness or carelessness on the part of readers. 'If my paper is worth reading, suh,' the dear old boy says, 'it is worth paying for.' There was a time when the General could do this without fear of losing a single subscriber. He never had the hard row to hoe that falls to the lot of the average country editor. He sprang into prominence at the first issue of the paper, because of the strong individuality he managed to infuse into his writings. He was forceful and aggressive, keen, fearless and unrelenting. He became a power to be feared. But—but that day is past, Uncle. You understand, Uncle, that I do not mean to criticize the dear old man."

"I understand that—you are a good, modest boy. Go on."

"Well, during the past three years the falling off has been something enormous. We have practically no readers within the city now. Our advertisements are few and constantly decreasing. The paper, in a word, is held up solely

by reason of its former prestige. The General will make no concessions. He will not reduce his rates below what they were in the days of the Chronicle's prosperity. I can do nothing. If I say a word he flies into a rage. I would not mind that so much, but I can see it wounds him deeply to have his course called into question by one whom he loves as the dear, good old man loves me. And so I am helpless."

"What you say, Sherman, fills me with surprise. The General does not appear to worry."

"But he does, Uncle, only he is too proud to show it."

"But what is the reason for this decline?"

"The General has, of course, made many bitter enemies, Uncle, and they are working, and have for a long time been working against him, but that in itself could not ruin the Chronicle. The fact is, the people have grown beyond the General. Journalism today is different from that of the past, the people no longer care for the General's kind of writing. They want clear, sensible, logical reasoning. It no longer tickles the average reader to see a man heaped with abuse and vituperation. It disgusts him. As you know the Chronicle owed its great prestige solely to its striking individuality, but it has remained unchanged through a quarter of a century, and it now wholly fails to fill the requirements of a modern constituency. A younger generation has come up; the world has moved on and left the General far behind. Another thing, the Chronicle is a weekly paper, and a weekly newspaper is now no longer possible. There are three daily newspapers in Clarenceburg, all modern and up to date in all their features. Our news columns are filled with stuff a week old, and your modern news reader wants to know in the evening what has happened that morning in India, Africa or Siberia. Moreover, each of the other papers publishes a weekly edition for country readers which in every way surpasses the old-fashioned Chronicle, and while their cost does not exceed five cents a copy, the General demands ten cents for his paper. You can see then how our younger rivals have outstripped us. The General cannot understand it at all. The dear old boy talks about the degenerate times, when the fault is really

his own. In a word, Uncle, the paper has been pushed to the wall; it is still read on the farms, but its subscription list is a very short one, and this decline has been going on for years. The General has been going down into his pocket to fill in the holes; he never says a word, but carries his proud head as high as he has ever done. When money is needed it is forthcoming, but it is only a matter of time, Uncle," concluded the boy with a shaking voice, "when he can no longer find the revenues of war; when his last dollar is gone—then and then only will he pause,—when he is left naked and alone in the world."

"Not alone, Sherman," said Mr. Watterson, in a deep voice. "Not alone."

"But as good, Uncle. He will not permit you to assist him. He will accept nothing. Even now I can see no good in telling you this. If you said one word to him he would, much as he loves you, show you the door. My only hope is that in your superior wisdom you may think of some way of helping him without wounding his pride—secretly, you know. I should like to continue in the work. I believe I am fitted for it," said the boy, with an air of complacency. "Anyhow, I like it, but I have been thinking of going into the Works. I have sounded Bennett and he is not adverse to my plan. It would relieve the General, and besides, I have certain theories which I would like to put into practice—"

"No theories, Sherman," cried Mr. Watterson, raising a warning finger. "No theories, I tell you. Henry George will do to dream about, but—"

"It is only in the matter of unions, Uncle," said Sherman, laughing. "I believe in labor unions, and I propose to form our men into a union, so that when necessary they may be able to protect their own interests."

"Let us hope, my boy," said Mr. Watterson, smiling, "that their interests will be looked to as long as the Works bear our name."

"But they should be taught to look after their own interests. They should be independent. And then, Uncle, if we could conduct the business on a co-operative basis—"

"I'm afraid, my lad, that I shall have to watch over you for some years to come."

"Surely, Uncle, I go in only under your supervision. Mr. Marblemore, whom I approached on the subject, received me very coldly. He gave me to understand that brains were required in a man who would manage so colossal a business. 'Brains, sir,' he repeated two or three times, with an emphasis signifying that your humble servant's garret was ill-furnished in that commodity. 'Brains, age and experience,' said the banker, which puts me out of the running on three counts. Mr. Marblemore is like his daughter in his openness and candor," concluded Sherman with so rueful an expression of countenance that Mr. Watterson rumbled with laughter.

"Mr. Marblemore will find," he said, mildly, "that I have a word to say in that matter. The fact is I am heartily tired of this thing. I should never have followed his advice in forming my business into a stock company, though I do not deny that my having done so has enormously increased my wealth and business importance. Indeed, the greatness of the business is wholly owing to Andrew's foresight and energy. The man is a wonder. The factory was a little one-horse concern when I took him in, but I was content and so was Sadie. But a dozen years or so ago there was a kind of mania abroad for forming anything and everything into a stock company, and I gave way to Andrew's importunities, greatly to my personal advantage I own, but somehow I was never satisfied. I would rather have the business in the family, and I shall so have it some day if I have to cut down its revenues by half. You see I am as old-fashioned as General Hamilton. Modern business suits me no more than it does him, but—"

"But you are wise enough to adapt yourself to modern conditions and the General is not."

"The General has never known anything of business. He is essentially an aristocrat. But, my boy, your leaving the Chronicle savors to me much of deserting the sinking ship; and so the General will regard it."

"But what can I do, Uncle? The General insists upon my accepting a weekly salary, and he cannot afford to pay this money. You and Aunt Sadie have been so generous to me that I have never stood in need of it, but he will not

listen to me. I have for years past been using it to push the paper in country districts, but I have now practically exhausted all territory. I propose to keep up my connection with the paper as far as furnishing two essays a week to its editorial page, if the General will permit me to do so without remuneration. I think, Uncle, that by dwelling on an extraordinary need of me in the Works you can so represent the matter to him that he will consider it his duty to advise me to leave him. Then, Uncle, I will act very much offended and sulky and finally agree to go, on condition that he permit me to write for the paper as heretofore without taxing his treasury. Will you think of it, Uncle?"

"Yes; but Sherman there is no need of all this. Would you not like to see the world, my boy? We have often spoken of it, you know, and you are now at the right age to enjoy the sights and experiences gained by extensive travel."

"I have thought of it, Uncle," replied Sherman, hesitatingly.

"Seeing the world broadens a man's mind, and gives balance and poise to one who makes intelligent use of his eyes and ears."

"But Uncle you never travelled?"

"Have not I? Why, at your age I had visited every city of importance in the country, and every spot of historic interest. Your father and I spent all our vacations jaunting about. You should at least become acquainted with your own country before settling down."

"The fact is, Uncle, I do not like the idea of leaving you and Aunt Sadie and—and—"

"And Myrtle?" said the big man, softly.

"Yes, Uncle."

"Have you ever spoken to her, Sherman—made an absolute declaration, I mean?"

"Not in so many words. She is so engrossed with the Cause that I can get no opportunity."

"You are very young, Sherman, and Myrtle too is young and does not mean to marry for some years to come. You know her theories, my son, and her determi-

nation. On this account, if no other, you had best go away for awhile."

"Not until I have spoken to her, Uncle!" cried Sherman, aghast.

"Well, Myrtle is a woman of depth and understanding," replied Mr. Watterson, slowly; "and no doubt knows her own mind. Speak by all means if you must. You have my best wishes."

"And Aunt Sadie's!"

"Without doubt."

"The fact is, Uncle, that unless I can go into the Works, the only thing left me is to go away for awhile. I'd like well enough to take a trip around the world, and if I thought a year or two of separation would bring Myrtle nearer to me, I'd start off tomorrow. Confound the Cause, anyhow!" he added, with an expression so vindictive that Mr. Watterson went off into a roar of laughter.

"The higher education of women, my boy," began the big man, with much gravity, "pre-supposes a race of men—"

"Don't tease, Uncle," interrupted the rueful lover. "It isn't that I blame women for kicking over the traces, nor that I think Myrtle in any way wrong. She's not. I believe in Woman's Suffrage with all my heart; but I wish some other fellow's girl had stumbled upon this mission first. I believe sincerely that Myrtle loves me, but the Cause is first in her heart now, and it must be allowed to run its course like all things else. Will you prepare Aunt Sadie, Uncle?"

"But there is no hurry, Sherman."

"Oh, no. In fact I shall not go—at least, I shall not leave the State until after the Convention. I want to spend a few weeks at Chicago first, however. So if you will suggest the thing to Aunt Sadie, I will go quietly about my preparations. Ah, here she comes, now!"

He rose to place a chair for the good lady, who now came rustling in.

"I know what Auntie's visit to you portends, Uncle," said he; "and so I'll make myself scarce."

"Has my boy been telling you of his plans, Winfield?" asked Aunt Sadie, smiling.

"Yes, Sadie. He wants to go into the Works, I understand. He has certain theories—"

"So he has, Winfield!" cried Aunt Sadie, proudly. "My boy is the wisest boy in the world."

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, Sadie, but he is still a boy, and to place one so young at the head of a business so extensive would be rather a hazardous thing to do; and, of course, you would not have him placed in a subordinate position?"

"Surely not, Winfield."

"I have been thinking," continued Mr. Watterson, gravely, "of placing him at the bottom and allowing him to work himself to the top. He could start, say as a coal stoker—"

"My boy a coal stoker!" cried Aunt Sadie, holding up her hands in horror.

"He is a very strong boy," said Winfield, meekly.

"Winfield!" cried Aunt Sadie, rising in great indignation. "I am astonished—"

"There, there, Sadie," said Winfield, hastily, "we will say no more about it."

"My boy a coal stoker!" cried Aunt Sadie, gazing in absolute wrath at her brother's reddening countenance. "How can you be so horrid, Winfield? My boy! Mine! My gracious me! I never was so angry in all my life!"

"Forgive me, Sadie," said Winfield, humbly.

"The very thought is wicked, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, severely.

"So it is, Sadie. But, sister mine, we must make up our minds to one thing. We must send the boy away for a while."

"Send my boy away, Winfield?" faltered Aunt Sadie.

"Yes, Sadie. He must travel and see the world; he must, as the saying is, tear himself from your apron strings."

"But why, Winfield?"

"That alone will make a man of him. He is a boy still, although past twenty years of age. He is a boy and he will continue a boy as long as he remains with us. You, Sadie, are too—what shall I say—too loving? I do not know quite how to make you understand."

"I understand, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, quietly, "we must part, my boy and I, in order that he may attain his full development, which my influence over him serves to retard. We must part as you and Myrtle parted and for the same reason."

"My dear Sadie!"

"I believe you are right, Winfield. But, oh, not at once, dear brother. Give me time to get used to the idea of losing my boy. Do not urge him, Winfield!"

"Surely not, Sadie. But such a parting is necessary. You know how unsettled he is mentally. I believe that traveling about, seeing the world, and coming into contact with strange people will give him that mental poise which he requires to round out his manly character. Do not cry, Sadie, he will come back to us improved in every way and his heart will remain constant in its loving tenderness to you."

"I know that, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, and yet she could not still the rising sobs—"and constant to Myrtle, too."

"Do you remember the evening of his coming, Sadie?" said Winfield, smiling—"that was really a wonderful prediction of yours."

Aunt Sadie, her eyes still overflowing with tears, burst into a fit of laughter at this and sat for fully five minutes crowing and gurgling and gasping and exploding and beating her hands together in an ecstasy of mirth.

"I knew it, Winfield," she cried, as soon as she could speak. "I knew it. How could she resist my sweet boy?"

"Did he tell you about the General, Sadie?"

"Yes, Winfield. I am so sorry."

"Things are not so bad as they seem, Sadie. In his prosperity the General very sensibly invested his money in real estate near his home. This property has now

enormously increased in value. I should say that the General is even now quite a wealthy man. Things are not so bad as they seem, my dear."

"And then, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, nodding, "you know the General has an immense estate in the South."

"No? Has he indeed? How do you know that, Sadie?"

"Why—why," said Aunt Sadie, in some confusion, "he told me so."

"He told you so, Sadie?"

"Oh long ago, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, more and more embarrassed, "ever so long ago. Oh, Winfield, don't you know? Can't you understand? When the General first came to us he had no idea of staying. He often talked of his plantation."

"Not to me, Sadie."

"To me he did. Everything was in ruins, he said. He meant to return only—only," concluded Aunt Sadie, in a very low voice; "he didn't. He stayed."

"I understand, Sadie," replied her brother, softly. "He stayed because he did not want to return alone. And the woman he loved would not—could not go with him. Is that it, Sadie?"

"Yes, brother," answered Aunt Sadie, with averted eyes.

"Poor General! I wish—however, it is all for the best, no doubt. And so this estate really exists? I must inquire, and if the worst comes, we will have something to fall back upon."

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH THE REVEREND MORTIMER RINGROSE DOES HIS DUTY.

Mrs. Ringrose was sitting with her newest baby in her arms, rocking gently to and fro, and Aunt Sadie bustling about the room was talking cheerfully of many things, when Mr. Ringrose came in softly, smiling a gentle pastoral smile. He was dressed for the street, and with hat and gloves in hand, stood for a moment looking down at the mewling babe.

"You have not looked so well for years, my dear," he said, drawing on his gloves leisurely. "You should be grateful to Sister Watterson for her kind care of you."

"But I don't want to walk, Mortimer," replied Mrs. Ringrose, plaintively; "and she does make me walk so! You do, Aunt Sadie, you know you do!"

"So I do, my dear," cried Aunt Sadie, cheerily; "walking is the very best of exercise."

"But I don't want to exercise."

"Oh, yes, you do, my dear, indeed you do," Aunt Sadie replied with conviction. "You only think you don't. That is all."

She had a charming way of ignoring the timid little woman's protestations which Mrs. Ringrose found irresistible.

"Sister Watterson is quite a practitioner," said His Reverence, smiling. "I have heard of marvelous cures wrought by her."

"You have heard wrong, sir," said Aunt Sadie.

"Not so, Sister Watterson," retorted Mr. Ringrose, warmly. "After witnessing your work in my own home, I shall believe all I hear of you. But there is one thing, Sister," he continued, in a gently chiding tone, "that you do in the kindness of your heart, that I do not approve of, and, as your pastor, it is my duty to speak of it to

you. You should not distribute wine among those whom you visit, Sister Watterson. Pardon me, Sister, but that is very wrong. It engenders discontent in the minds of those whose humbler lot in life makes wine a luxury, and it, moreover, fosters the vice of intemperance among those who are naturally disposed to excessive drinking. It is Human Nature, Sister, and Human Nature, as we know, is weak and erring."

"Pardon me, sir," said Aunt Sadie, patting her hair gently, but speaking in a very firm voice, "if I presume to differ with you. I have learned by experience that wine is very strengthening to a body weakened by continued illness. It encourages appetite and assists digestion in those to whom wholesome food is necessary to recovery. It creates a warmth in the body which, in health, is in my opinion hurtful, but which, in sickness, is very beneficial, furnishing as it does a stimulus to the vigorous circulation of the blood and an aid to healthful digestion—two functions upon the proper performance of which recovery and health wholly depend. In health we can exercise our bodies and thus bring about the results which in sickness must be attained by other means. Nor have I in any instance found," continued Aunt Sadie, tucking away a score of imaginary curls and locks of hair, "that the drinking of wine in sickness creates a desire for it in health any more than for any other medicine. As for the discontent which you say is bred in the minds of those to whom wine is an habitual luxury, that—pardon me—is a grievous error. The possession or lack of the luxuries of life does not in my opinion constitute a distinction between people. We are all equal before God and before the state."

To say that the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose was astonished at Aunt Sadie's spirited defense, would be putting it mildly. He was absolutely stunned with amazement. The good lady sat bridling and blushing, a little frightened, perhaps, at her own temerity. She had not meant, very likely, to go so far as to positively rebuke the minister, but she had been obliged to defend herself against the same charge before, and her indig-

nation was very great. It will at least be seen that His Reverence was no longer an angel in Aunt Sadie's mind.

"No doubt Sister Watterson is right, my dear," said His Reverence, turning to his wife.

He was deeply stung by the scorn with which Aunt Sadie had repudiated the charge peculiarly his own—that of fostering discontent in the minds of the more humbly placed citizens. He wondered as he went into the street if this was the beginning of the end. Was his popularity passing thus early? He was used to it; he had experienced it many times: first admiration amounting to worship, then devotion in a lesser and lesser degree until a general revulsion of feeling set in dead against him. He wondered where the trouble lay. He could not divine the cause. Surely it was not so with all ministers —then why peculiarly with him? Did he not discourse eloquently, labor earnestly, sing touchingly? Did not he flatter, cajole, wheedle and soothe as others did? Did he not laugh when others laughed, weep when others wept, sing when others sang and dance to the tune of all? He visited his parishioners assiduously, talked sympathetically with them, adapting himself with ease and grace to their intellectual level, and even in zealous discourse turned every pretty sentence into a subtle flattery. What then was the cause of the universal contempt in which his pastorate invariably ended?

He had no genuine feeling of religious enthusiasm within him. He could not minister to the soul; but he did not for one moment think of attributing this failure of permanent power to his dearth of religious feeling. His discourses, while prettily worded and finely delivered, lacked the real fire of genuine zeal. At first delightful to the ear, they gradually palled. There was too much of a sameness about them. They had but one purpose, one ending. They created self-satisfaction in the minds of his hearers, but no compunction, no consciousness of sin, no remorse for wrong doing. They pleased the shallow-minded, but gave the more thoughtful no food for reflection. Several of the more prominent of his flock had ceased attending divine service under

him, and His Reverence was becoming anxious. He had missed Mr. Watterson of late and one or two others. He thought he knew the reason of Mr. Watterson's withdrawal, and he had resolved that very morning to speak to the big politician about it. He had also thought of a plan which, if carried to a successful issue, could not but strengthen his standing with Brother Marblemore. If, as he feared, his popularity was indeed waning, it would be well to secure the good will of that all-powerful member. He was indebted to Sister Rosewood for much information concerning the weakness, the virtues, the foibles, and follies of the more powerful members of his flock, and the knowledge thus gained he used with exceeding adroitness. He thought he knew just how far he could go in gently chiding this or that one, in order to win and sustain a reputation for a fearless performance of duty, and at the same time avoid wounding anyone. He had gone a bit too far with Aunt Sadie, as we have seen, and had met with a decided rebuke. He resolved to be more careful with her brother.

Mr. Delaware received His Reverence with a smiling countenance. Yes, Mr. Watterson was in, but very busy. Yes, he was alone. He would announce His Reverence, if His Reverence would kindly seat himself. "Oh, no intrusion, Your Reverence, no intrusion. Ah, step right in, Your Reverence. Mr. Watterson is at leisure."

"Good morning, Brother Watterson," said Mr. Ringrose.

"Good morning, sir," was the courteous response. "Be seated."

The Boss's desk was heaped high with papers, but the Boss's manner was that of a man with oceans of time at his disposal.

"Politics must be a very engrossing—er—pursuit, Brother Watterson," said His Reverence, with a smiling glance at the numerous letters and papers, "very engrossing, and I presume attractive to men of active mind?"

"Yes."

"But, Brother, is it not also a pursuit very conducive to perversion of character? I have heard so."

"It depends altogether upon the man."

"Not so, Brother," said His Reverence, warmly. "I take exception with you there. All men are imbued with the same Human Nature, and Human Nature being weak and erring, all are alike subject to its pitfalls. I have no doubt, now, that a man occupying your eminent position in politics meets with many temptations? Of course, and that being the case, how can we blame or severely censure a man who falls a victim to the natural weakness of erring Human Nature? We cannot in justice do it, knowing that in like circumstances, all men being imbued with the same Human Nature, would be alike weak and erring. What does all this lead to?" continued His Reverence, surveying Brother Watterson's reddening countenance and widening eyes in smiling deprecation. "I have missed you, Brother, from my congregation for several consecutive Sundays, and I have called to remonstrate gently with you. It is my duty to do so, Brother Watterson. I made some reference to politics and the errors of politicians in a recent discourse of mine, and I have thought that they may, perhaps, have offended you, and I come to you privately, therefore, to explain my meaning."

He paused, a little ill at ease beneath the curious steadfastness of Brother Watterson's glance. It was almost burning in its fierce intensity. His cheeks, too, usually aglow with ruddy health, were now as pallid as the broad brow above them.

"Go on, sir," said Brother Watterson, in a deep voice.

"I did not mean to reproach anyone, least of all you, Brother. No, far from it. I am something of a student of men. I rarely err in an estimate of character and no one can know better than I how far above the average of men you are. But I also know that the man is a creature apart from the politician. The charges of political corruption made so frequently against you are brought against the politician and not against the man. Politics is a game of hazard. Ends must be gained, and

to gain them, means must sometimes be used which men in the ordinary walks of life would shrink from. But, Brother Watterson, whatever the exigencies of a given political situation require of you to do as a politician does not affect your character as a man nor your standing as a Christian. When you attend divine worship on Sunday, you lay aside all that pertains to politics like a cloak, and step forth simply a man, and therefore whatever your pastor may say of your ordinary occupation, in dwelling upon the manifold errors arising out of the weakness of Human Nature, you should not take offense."

"I thank you, sir," said Mr. Watterson ringing the bell.

"It was my duty, Brother—" began Mr. Ringrose, rising in some alarm at the big man's black scowl.

"You have performed it, sir," replied Mr. Watterson. "Delaware, show the gentleman out."

He stood towering in all his gigantic height above the cowering minister, pointing to the door.

"Good-day, Brother," said His Reverence, retreating with a sickly smile.

Mr. Delaware was deeply agitated. He had never seen his mild, even-tempered Chief so very angry before. He positively snarled at the minister when the latter, with an assumption of ease, inquired after the well-being of Sister Delaware. Mr. Ringrose went out into the hall and down the steps and paused in the lower doorway to collect his scattered thoughts. He had laid out a regular plan of action for the day and he stood for a moment debating in his mind whether to carry out his original intention of calling on Brother Marblemore or not. He had been twice rebuffed that day, and in quarters where he had least expected it. The Wattersons had always been friendly, though to be sure he had of late noticed a kind of constraint in the bearing both of Aunt Sadie and her brother, but he had ascribed the change to divers reflections on politics and politicians, which he had thoughtlessly permitted himself to utter in one of his popular discourses. He had sought to smooth that error over, but he had somehow sunken deeper into the mire.

He tried to think where his offense lay, but could not do so. He shook his head sadly, and reflecting that with the Wattersons against him, he had all the more reason for Brother Marblemore, he resolutely took his way to the bank.

His mission with the banker was a pacific one. He knew, as everybody knew, of the enmity existing between Mr. Marblemore and General Hamilton, but he did not know how deeply rooted that enmity was, how bitter and inexorable the principals, and so he ambitiously hoped to bring about a more amiable feeling, if not an absolute reconciliation between the two men. To do so would, he knew, reflect great credit upon himself. He thought he had little reason to doubt the success of his mission. He had met the General on divers occasions when visiting the Wattersons, and from what he had seen of the dignified old man in those moments of genial relaxation, he judged him to be a mild, good-humored gentleman, of a gentle and retiring disposition, a little old-fashioned in manner, perhaps, but without doubt pliable enough, if deftly handled. As for Mr. Marblemore, as stiff and arrogant as he was, as hard and cold, he believed he could so represent the matter to him that the banker could not but meet him half-way. At any rate, he could at least attempt the task without risk. It was a mission fully in keeping with his sacred calling.

Johnson was not at all sure that Mr. Marblemore was at leisure. He would inquire. Yes, with unheard of condescension the banker came in person to the door of his private office to invite His Reverence to enter. He followed him in and waved him stiffly to a seat, and himself sat down, taking up his pen as if to intimate to His Reverence a need of urgency on his part.

"Brother Marblemore," said His Reverence, smiling, "I know what a very busy man you are and how important to the business world, and so I will come at once to the cause of my intrusion. I have tried repeatedly to see you at your home, but my visits have all been unfortunately timed—either you were away, or deep in mechanical experiments, at which times no servant dares

disturb you. And so I came here. I have noticed with sorrow the deep animosity existing between you and General Hamilton, Brother. It is—it cannot but be a painful subject to you, but it is my duty to speak of it. I do not know the origin of the difficulty between you—I have seen enough to know that all the bitterness, the injustice and the enmity emanates from the General. Your conduct throughout has been that of a devout, consistent Christian. You have treated his repeated attacks with the silent contempt which they deserve, and so in effect offered the other cheek to the smiter. But can you not go one step farther, Brother Marblemore? Will you not forgive him and extend the hand of peace and friendship to this misguided old man?"

Mr. Marblemore had listened to the foregoing in a kind of daze, so deep was his astonishment, so great his indignation that any one should come to him with such a proposition, knowing how the insolent old man had for years publicly abused, insulted, ridiculed, satirized and affronted him, almost deprived him of his breath. He sat for a time in silence regarding the minister, his countenance purpling with rage, his breath coming in short, quick gasps, his fists clinched, his whole body quivering with internal agitation.

"Do—do you come from him?" he asked finally, speaking in a barely audible voice.

"No, no, Brother," said His Reverence, throwing out both white hands in horrified expostulation. "I came to you first, knowing that you are in the right and he in the wrong, knowing, too, that you are a good, devout Christian—have I not reason to know it?—while he is not. He does not attend church at all, he is a heathen, Brother, a perfect heathen, and as such deserving of your pity and unworthy of your friendship. But let me plead with you, Brother. Forgive him. Show him how a Christian can overlook abuse born of ignorance and malignity. Your pardoning him would make many people happy, and would set a noble example to lesser lights in the church. It is Human Nature, I know, to cherish animosity; Human Nature is weak and erring, but a man

—a Christian like Brother Marblemore — should rise superior to this weakness. I shall go to him presently, and I hope that the message which I shall carry him will be one of peace and forgiveness."

"Yes, go to him," roared the banker, starting up with frightful vehemence. "Go to him and tell him to publish an apology to me for as many years as he has abused me; tell him to go to every reader of his dirty paper, past and present, alive or dead, and tell each and every one of them that he is a liar and a scurrilous scoundrel and blackguard; tell him to come to me and on his knees beg my forgiveness, and tell him then I would see him damned into the deepest depths of hell before I would forgive him."

The fury of the man's aspect as he uttered these words quite terrified the minister. He sat pale and shrinking beneath the blazing anger of the banker's eyes.

"Those are hard conditions, Brother," he said, rubbing his white hands together nervously, "though I have no doubt that you will modify them upon reflection. I shall go to him and try to reason with him and endeavor to make him aware of his iniquity in so constantly assailing so upright, so honorable, so virtuous and Christian a man."

"Yes, go to him," said Mr. Marblemore, knitting his great red hands together, "go to him by all means."

"Good day, Brother," said Mr. Ringrose, rising promptly. Mr. Marblemore did not notice him—he had sunk back into his seat and now sat staring straight before him, with an aspect so terrible that His Reverence was glad to make his escape.

"Another foolish move," reflected His Reverence, ruefully, "truly this is my unlucky day. Who would have thought that a man so stiff and cold was capable of such anger, such rage, such absolute madness! I must go to General Hamilton and endeavor to win from him a formal word of apology for Marblemore. I must be firm with the old man—firm and stern. Mildness would be thrown away on him, I fancy, and should my words anger him, all well and good, I have nothing to lose or

gain by him, a heathen." He walked quite around the square ere he had fully regained his composure. He patted Daniel's woolly pate with an air of smiling patronage that quite captivated the little negro, who showed all his ivories in a grin of breadth and pleasure, and hastened to announce his genial reverence to his master. The General was alone when the minister entered. He was sitting at his desk writing and smoking. He wheeled in his chair and confronted the minister with an expression of countenance somewhat less genial, though not less courteous than that which he showed him when they met as fellow-guests beneath the roof-tree of his friend's house. He motioned Daniel to place a chair for his visitor.

"General Hamilton," said Mr. Ringrose, when Daniel had gone, "I thank you for your courtesy, but I do not care to sit. I stand here, sir, as the representative of Mr. Marblemore, whose pastor I have the honor to be. You are wronging that noble gentleman, sir; you have for years past insulted him in every way, and I demand reparation in the form of a personal and a public apology. Unless you comply with my demands I shall take occasion to brand your paper as it deserves. Your conduct, sir, has been outrageous. Human Nature is weak, I know, and—"

He got no further. The General had him by the collar by this time and was shaking him with a vigor absolutely amazing in one so old.

"Daniel," roared the General, "the do'h!"

Daniel, never surprised at any action on the part of his hot-headed master hastened to obey, then stood aside, grinning from ear to ear to watch the struggle. The General with his hand twisted in the minister's collar was hustling him to the door with all possible speed. His Reverence did not try to defend himself, but, gasping out feeble protestations and pleas for mercy, he sought with both hands to free the General's tenacious grip, but ere he succeeded, the General had forced him to the outer door, and with a savage kick sent him staggering into the street.

It was then high noon and the street was thronged with people hurrying homeward to the midday meal, so that the minister's precipitate exit from the Chronicle Office was witnessed by fully two score men, women and children. In a moment a great crowd had collected. Mr. Ringrose, having brought up hard against the gnarled trunk of a tree that grew in front of the Chronicle office, stood leaning against it, staring with an expression of terror at the General, who remained for some minutes standing in his doorway, his fierce countenance livid, his entire frame quivering with rage. Then the door banged savagely and His Reverence was alone in the midst of the curious crowd.

"It is nothing," he said, with a sickly smile, "don't mind me. I will be right in a moment."

But among the folk collected were various of his parishioners. They questioned him sympathetically. He explained the cause of his expulsion readily. He had called to remonstrate gently against the General's senseless and unjustifiable attacks upon a prominent member of his church. He would mention no names, because what he had done was done entirely upon his own authority. He had visited General Hamilton on a mission of peace, and General Hamilton had assailed him with kicks and blows. Ah! well, it was his duty to bear with resignation the rebuffs of the ungodly.

"Think no more of it, my friends," he said, gently. "I have done my duty and my soul is at peace."

The occurrence gained circulation with astonishing quickness. Before night it was known all over the town, how the General had assailed, beaten, kicked and shot the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose, who was said to be lying at death's door, and all because His Reverence had sought to bring about a reconciliation between the choleric old man and his ancient enemy, Mr. Marblemore. Great indignation was expressed against the General, who was seen that very evening walking with great deliberation towards his home, reading his exchanges as usual, to all appearances entirely oblivious of the dark glances cast upon him.

The Reverend Mortimer Ringrose kept to the house for several days after the encounter. The incident not only served to increase his popularity with his sympathetic flock, but it firmly rooted him in the esteem of the all-powerful banker. Mr. Marblemore called at the parsonage on the evening of the encounter, and in person tendered his thanks to his zealous champion and defender, whom he invited to dinner and ever after treated with the cordiality which he reserved for his warmest friends.

The General was not without his admirers among the more ungodly of the city, and the prowess displayed on this occasion by the gallant old warrior won him many more, so that the storm awakened by the encounter raged its full nine days. Then it subsided as storms do subside, and all that served to recall the General's undying hatred was the frequent allusions to His Reverence in later issues of the Chronicle, wherein he was variously dubbed "Marblemore's parrot," "'Marblemore's valet," "Marblemore's nigger," and the like.

Whenever afterwards in their bits of gossip, the absence of the Wattersons from their accustomed pew was remarked upon, the zealous defenders of His Reverence pointed to this encounter, and expressed astonishment that people so intelligent as the Wattersons should side with General Hamilton, and change their place of worship in pure friendship of so heathenish and arrogant a man.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH ONE WOMAN DECLARES AND ANOTHER CONFESSES.

The great doors of the Marblemore mansion are thrown wide, and John and James and George and Henry are bowing a host of visitors into the gorgeous drawing-rooms. Mrs. Marblemore is giving a ball, and with her usual splendid disregard of social laws, she has invited half the town to her entertainment. Pretty shop-girls mingle here on terms of equality with the daughters of substantial business and professional men, and the wives of artisans and grocers are made as welcome as the haughty dames of greater men. The banker's lovely wife is equally kind to all,—a little cold, perhaps, and scornful in manner as she greets the more exclusive of her neighbors who, while highly disapproving the headstrong lady's course, do not, therefore, stay at home.

The Wattersons came early in the evening, and Mr. Watterson at once became the center of attraction to the more staid and elderly gentlemen present. Sherman remained for a time beside his uncle while Aunt Sadie and Myrtle went among their feminine friends and joined merrily in the babble of tongues. All was gaiety and animation. The doors of adjoining rooms were thrown open as the evening waxed later, and the crowd still came pouring in. The girls, rising on tiptoe, peeped into the great ball-room in glorious anticipation. The glassy floor which looked so tempting, the thousand flashing lights, the tuning orchestra, the fragrant scent of flowers wafted from the neighboring conservatory, all combined to fill their hearts with fluttering joy and happiness.

For what may not such an evening bring forth? Many a happy wife dated her happiness from one of Mrs. Marblemore's grand parties; and every little maid present knew it and realized her opportunity, and hoped ardently to profit by it. No wonder the numberless

bright eyes turned upon the kind banker's lady shone with love and admiration.

Mr. Marblemore, looking somewhat ill at ease in a dress suit of the conventional cut, donned in honor of the occasion, remained almost all the evening in a spacious alcove chatting with Mr. Watterson and one or two out-of-town business associates, his guests for the time being. His admiring eyes were often turned towards the door where his beautiful wife stood receiving her guests. All our old acquaintances were there—Messrs. Dayton, Everhart, Langhorn and Bennett, leading business men of the city. Likewise Billy Boyle and Mr. Gormon, with various colleagues in the city council. There were Mr. Jocelyn of Chicago and Mr. Andrews of Peoria, both well known in financial circles. Their talk was mainly of business; but in time the conversation drifted to general news of current interest, and finally into politics. Mr. Jocelyn was curious to know how the battle between the Dillingham-Southgate faction and the regular organization would end. That such a battle was imminent he was sure. The newspapers about this time were full of Dillingham and Southgate and a certain offensive alliance which the two were said to have formed against Watterson and the organization. Mr. Jocelyn looked inquiringly at Mr. Watterson as he put the question. Mr. Watterson rarely talked politics in public. He smilingly assented to all of Mr. Jocelyn's speculations, suppositions, predictions and insinuations, but said never a word either to affirm or deny them.

"Dillingham has joined hands with Southgate," said Mr. Jocelyn. "There can be no doubt about that."

"No?" said Mr. Watterson, raising his eyebrows.

"And they are very strong. They'll split the Republican party in the State from center to circumference, mark my words. And they'll win out. The territory they hold, though small in area, out-balances the rest of the State in point of population. And population is what counts."

"Yes," said Mr. Watterson, approvingly.

"Votes are what count," interrupted Mr. Marble-

more, weightily, "and the Republicans' strength lies mainly in the rural districts. The large cities where the Dillingham-Southgate forces lie are Democratic, and Democratic voters cannot hurt the organization as a body."

"Cook County as a whole is Republican," said Andrews, stoutly, "and Dillingham controls the county. My friend, Mr. Woolworth, with whom I spoke the other day, expressed himself very strongly on the subject. He does not like the outlook for the organization. He believes that the Dillingham-Southgate combination will down it utterly."

"I have a very high regard for Mr. Woolworth's shrewdness—in business matters," said Mr. Watterson, mildly.

"But Mr. Andrews and I agree with him," said Mr. Jocelyn, forcefully. "He thinks that you will be forced to the wall."

"That is your opinion, is it?" said Mr. Watterson, clasping his hands behind him and smiling gently.

"Yes—Mr. Andrews' and mine," replied Mr. Jocelyn.

He looked up at Mr. Watterson eagerly, as did the others. The big man's large brown eyes roved carelessly over the assembly. They dwelt for the space of a single second on Mrs. Marblemore, as she bent in graceful acknowledgment to the greeting of the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose. He frowned and looked away. He saw Aunt Sadie in the center of the very largest group of women. She was talking away with great animation and bursting every now and then into merry laughter. Myrtle, surrounded by a bevy of girls, sat in her usual thoughtful attitude, half listening to the babble of tongues around her, half abstracted in a fit of musing.

"Quite a gathering, Andrew," he said, turning to his host.

"But, Mr. Watterson—" began Mr. Jocelyn.

"Talk business to me, Jocelyn, as much as you like and at any time you like, but don't talk politics to a politician," said Mr. Marblemore, smiling.

He turned with the utmost cordiality to meet His Reverence, who came up at this moment.

"Ah, Brother Ringrose," he said, genially, "I'm pleased to see you, very pleased."

"Thank you, Brother," replied His Reverence, rather wincing, as he surrendered his fine white hand into the banker's powerful grip.

Mr. Watterson remained serenely standing with his hands clasped behind him while the minister showered greetings all around him.

"Ah, Brother Watterson," said His Reverence, softly, "a pleasant evening."

Mr. Watterson deliberately surveyed the man as he stood before him, smiling and holding out his hand.

"Yes," he said, slowly, "a pleasant evening."

But his hands remained clasped behind him and his stern glance remained fixed upon the minister's face. Mr. Ringrose colored, then grew pale, and dropping his hand to his side, he stepped back, looking around quickly. He encountered many astonished eyes. It seemed to him that every person in that vast assembly had witnessed his humiliation. But no, not every person! Mr. Marblemore's eyes were too intent upon his wife to have noticed it. He ranged himself beside his host, his eyes following the banker's glance, and more than once the object of their mutual regard cast a troubled glance in their direction.

Sherman was flitting everywhere, paying his respects to his numerous feminine friends. He was received kindly by young and old, for he was a general favorite. He smiled into the eyes of all his pretty friends and whispered words of roguish import the while they laughed brightly up at him. But though thus gayly employed, his eyes ever wandered to a certain spot where sat the queen of them all, and more often than not he met her glance half way. Rosie was there and so, of course, was Elmer, but they were not together, as Sherman felt they should be. Rosie sat on the outskirts of a group of gayly chatting girls. She looked pale and worn.

"What's the matter, Rosie?" said Sherman, sitting down beside her.

"Nothing, Sherman," she replied, smiling a little.

"But you don't look at all well, Rosie, nor happy like you used."

"Don't I? I am, though."

"Myrtle tells me that you never come to see her now. She feels hurt."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Tell her not to think of me. I don't deserve it," said Rosie, with a sudden rush of tears which she vainly sought to choke back.

"How can you say so, Rosie?" said Sherman, deeply shocked at sight of her weeping. "You know that Myrtle loves you, and Aunt Sadie—"

"Oh, Sherman, hush!" cried Rosie, greatly agitated. "Please go away; please do, Sherman."

He obeyed her at once, wondering, puzzled and anxious. Had she quarreled with Elmer? That seemed most likely. He looked around in search of Elmer. Why, there he sat beside Myrtle! He was laughing gayly and talking, doubtless, in his usual droll fashion. Myrtle was smiling. With something of the same savage impulse that had been his most prominent characteristic in his cub days, he started towards them, determined to take his sweetheart away from the dissipated wretch. But he heard his name called ere he had made half the distance, and turning in answer to the determined summons, he saw Clara beckoning him. She was surrounded by half a dozen young men. There was young Langhorn, Dan Thompson, Jack Murly, old Jenkins and one or two others—all men about town of Elmer's stripe, and that young gentleman's boon companions. Delighted with Clara's gay repartee and masculine freedom of manner they were bantering and quizzing her amid much uproarious laughter. Clara waved them away as Sherman approached, coloring with pleasure as his hand met hers.

"You have been here half an hour," she said, reproachfully, "and you did not come near me in all that time."

"Make him give an account of himself," cried young Langhorn, grinning. "He owes it to you, Clara."

She was Clara to all her male friends.

"Didn't you see him sitting beside pretty little Rosie a moment ago?" asked Jack Murly, slyly. "Better keep an eye on him, old girl."

"Hush, you fellows, and go away," said Clara, frowning, "I'm tired of you. I want to talk to Sherman and I do not want you about. Go away, all of you."

They obeyed, laughing as they went, and casting half humorous, half envious glances at Sherman, who gazed ruefully after them.

"What did you do that for?" he said, frowning.

"Because I wished to have you alone," said Clara, smiling. "Now, don't be cross, Sherman, please."

Sherman did feel decidedly cross, nor did he try very hard to conceal his irritation.

"Do you think I care for those fellows?" said Clara, disdainfully. "I don't, Sherman. They amuse me and I tolerate them."

Sherman still looked cross. He gazed moodily in Myrtle's direction, and scowled to see Elmer still by her side. His rude abstraction did not anger Clara. She sat silently regarding him with gentle eyes. She compelled his glance by placing her hand on his arm. He had the grace to look ashamed, but to save his life he could think of nothing to say to her. The music now struck up a lively air, and a score of couples went whirling across the glassy floor in time to the delicious waltz. He felt that he ought to ask Clara to dance with him. He hesitated for a moment in pure stubbornness of spirit, then looking at her, he was struck by the sweetness of her expression as she sat regarding him.

"Will you dance, Clara?" he asked.

"Not now, Sherman," she replied. "Let us walk in the conservatory."

Sherman gave her his arm. She glanced proudly around at her friends as they slowly made their way through the throng. She wore a low-cut evening gown of a pale pink color, trimmed with lace which, fitting

with faultless precision to her robust form, exposed to the full her finely rounded throat and beautiful shoulders. Jewels flashed in her hair, around her throat and arms and fingers. She looked very beautiful. They paused a moment to watch the dancers.

"Do you like dancing, Sherman?" asked Clara.

"No, I'm clumsy; and besides, I think an able-bodied man might put in his time to better advantage than in jumping up and down that way."

"But jumping up and down isn't dancing, Sherman, and you're not at all clumsy. You're the funniest boy!"

She laughed, pressing his arm warmly as they went on. The conservatory was quite deserted. They strolled slowly and for a time in silence through the wide center aisle between many rare and exquisite palms and plants and flowers. Sherman could think of nothing to say, although he could rattle away upon occasion. Clara, too, was silent. She felt unaccountably embarrassed. She looked away, nipping the leaves of the flowers as they walked along. As he still continued silent, her glances returned to him. The strains of the dying waltz came floating out to them, softened by the thickening foliage. She drew closer to him, pressing his arm to her side, but still he did not speak. He looked down at her, however, and his glance was very kind, she thought. She held his eyes with a look of passionate adoration. They paused at that moment, having reached the extremity of the glass partition.

"Shall we go back, Clara?" said Sherman, in a low voice.

He felt impressed, chastened, somehow. He knew not why. Her eyes were very sweet. They held his glance for moments. The place was rather dimly lighted, the thick foliage screened the light and scattered it unevenly. They stood in momentary shadow, but the light was still sufficient to reveal the girl's overpowering emotion.

"Let us return, Clara," he said, hurriedly.

"No, no," said Clara.

She placed her hand upon his breast and looked up

at him with blushing cheeks and eager, expectant eyes. She was waiting for him to speak, to say something; but he had nothing to say. Her glance no longer compelled his; her voice had broken the charm. His eyes roved away, troubled and sorely perplexed.

"Oh, Sherman," said Clara, suddenly, half turning away. "Why are you so unkind to me?"

"Why—why! I do not mean to be," stammered Sherman.

"But you are—at least, you are not more kind to me than to other girls, while I—"

"Let us go back, Clara," said Sherman.

"No, Sherman," said Clara, beseechingly. "Why are you not more kind to me? Can you not see, Sherman? Are you blind?"

"Clara, Clara, we had better return. We had, indeed."

"No, no, dear Sherman. Look at me. Come, Sherman, do look, do look at me."

He did look at her shamefacedly. Her eyes were wet with tears, her lips trembling, her bosom heaving. She was very pale.

"Clara, pray compose yourself," said Sherman, eagerly. "Do not say that which you will bitterly regret, Clara—"

"Sherman, I love you dearly," she said, without heeding his words. She colored deeply as she spoke, and the burning blushes dried the tears on her cheeks and in her eyes. "I do, Sherman, I do! Can you not see? I have tried to show it to you in every way, but you are blind!"

None are so blind as those who will not see. Alas! she knew it not. She stood before him now that she had spoken, confused and trembling, terribly agitated. Sherman, too, was agitated, but for a far different reason. A feeling of exquisite pain, mingling with a deep sense of shame filled his mind and heart.

"Let us go back, Clara," he said again. "Come."

He drew her arm through his, but she did not stir.

"Give me my answer, Sherman," she said, speaking in a low voice.

"I do not know what you mean. Come, Clara."

"No, Sherman, I want my answer," said Clara, very pale but resolute. "I love you and—and I want to marry you. Answer me."

"Clara, why will you say such things," cried Sherman, reddening. "Come, now, there's a good, sweet girl. See, people are approaching."

"I want my answer," said Clara.

"Your answer to what? Come along."

He drew her a step forward, roughly, but she looked at him with such gentle, beseeching eyes that his anger melted into remorse.

"Forgive me, Clara," he said. "I'm a brute, an ungrateful, unmannerly brute. I am not worthy of your love, indeed, I am not."

It was her answer. She became deathly pale and swayed where she stood, as if about to fall. Sherman caught her in his arms. He held her for a moment, looking down at her scared nearly out of his wits. But the faintness was only momentary. She opened her eyes, blushing scarlet to find herself in his arms. He was calling her name in a low voice and kissing her in a passion of shame and self-reproach. She covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, and wept with her head on his breast. He tried to soothe her, but was himself almost overcome.

"Hush, Clara, there are lots and lots of men a thousand million times better than I am who would give their eyes for your love. Look, Clara, if I did not love someone better than all the world, I would go down on my knees and beg you for your love. Indeed I would. Clara, I will go away—I am going away for several years and you will soon forget me and this night."

He said much more to the purpose, talking in a stammering, incoherent way, kissing her cheeks and hands the while, as if declaring instead of denying a passion. Clara gradually became calmer. The outburst was all the more violent because she was of the kind

who rarely give way to tears, a firm, strong, self-reliant young creature who bore herself bravely in the face of the world conquering care by defying it.

"You are very good, Sherman," she said. "Don't mind me. I brought it on myself and I am strong enough to bear it."

"Forget all about it, Clara. It was a dream. See, people are coming out now in real earnest."

"Kiss me again, Sherman," she said, "for the last time."

He did so, without the slightest feeling of repulsion such as she had always inspired in him. He had never liked her so well as at that moment. God, what a brute he was!

She clung to him passionately.

"I will always remember that kiss, Sherman," she said, "always."

"You are a good, sweet woman, Clara," he said.

"Whatever I am or have been, believe me, Sherman, I never was or will be so true a woman as I was but now."

"Are you angry with me?"

"No, no. I am not that kind. I can take my medicine like a—man."

"A man! God help us!"

"Good-night, Sherman, I shall not return."

He bent down and kissed her hand. She paused for a moment, looking up into his face with infinite tenderness.

"You said you loved someone, Sherman," she said, softly. "Who is it? Will you tell me?"

"Myrtle."

Her eyes grew round with astonishment.

"And I never suspected it!" she gasped; "you are so much like brother and sister that I—does she return your love?"

"Yes—that is, I hope and believe she does."

"Ah."

"Forgive me, Clara."

"There is nothing to forgive, Sherman," said Clara, quietly.

She smiled at him but she was very pale and her lips trembled.

"Good-night."

She went away quickly, and Sherman walked about disconsolately. Other people now were strolling among the flowers. Jacques, Elmer's body-servant, who apparently had been loitering behind the palms, glided by him, grinning behind his hand. Sherman scowled savagely after him. Had the boy been listening? More than likely. But no matter. Nothing mattered now, he repeated, moodily. Little bursts of laughter came to him, soft whispering and giggling told of joyous conferences. He avoided the others as much as possible. He had about resolved to go in search of Aunt Sadie among the revellers within, when he beheld her stately form approaching.

"My precious boy," she said, coming up. "I have been looking everywhere for you. All alone?"

"Yes, Auntie," he replied, drawing her behind a giant palm and kissing her.

"Don't you care to dance, child?"

"No, unless you will dance with me, Auntie."

Aunt Sadie laughed and shook her head.

"My dancing days are over, darling," she said, "but there are lots of pretty girls who would be glad to dance with my boy."

"Do you know what I would do if we were at home and alone in your room, Auntie? I would lay my head in your lap and cry. Am I not a booby?"

"What is the matter, dear? Tell me."

"I'm not feeling very well. I'm tired and the noise distracts me," said the boy peevishly.

Aunt Sadie quickly drew him into the light and looked into his eyes. They sparkled with more than usual brightness, and his forehead was hot and dry.

"You are feverish, darling," she said, uneasily. "I will call Winfield and do you look up Myrtle."

"By no means, Auntie, I do not want to spoil your pleasure."

"Pooh! my pleasure is in seeing all of my friends so happy and now that I have seen them, I would like to go home. I have been trotting around all day and I am feeling tired, and poor Winfield is always bored to death by this kind of thing."

"But Myrtle likes to dance, Auntie."

"Then she may remain."

"But who will escort her home?"

"Oh, dear! There are any number of young men, I am sure, who would be delighted—"

"No doubt," said Sherman, with a grimace, "but I wouldn't like that."

"Oh, you selfish boy!" said Aunt Sadie, laughing.

"I will go and see her, Auntie."

"Do, darling, and dance with her. It will make her happy, and I am not sure but it will relieve your headache. Winfield and I will go home."

Rosie was sitting in the drawing-room beside an old lady, to whom she was talking eagerly, but her bright eyes were constantly fixed upon the doorway leading into the ball-room as if she was expecting, or at least hoping, for someone who never came. Sherman stood watching her for a moment. He saw two or three young men approach her, suing, doubtless, for a dance. But she denied herself to all. All was happiness and flashing gayety in the ball-room. Looking eagerly among the dancers Sherman descried Myrtle. She was paired with Elmer, going through the orderly movements of a quadrille. He ground his teeth in a fury at the sight. The dance ended almost with his appearance, and the two came towards the door in which he had taken his stand. Myrtle was radiant, with eyes sparkling, cheeks aglow and lips parted in a joyous smile. She met his glance and tossed her head archly.

"The next dance is mine," said Sherman, advancing to relieve Elmer of his precious charge. Myrtle placed her hand on Sherman's arm and ranged herself beside him quite as a matter of course.

"Pardon me, Miss Myrtle," said Elmer, bowing gracefully, "if you will look at your card you will see that the dance now forming is promised to me."

It was true. Myrtle looked at Sherman inquiringly, patting her hair with a pretty little movement, a habit unconsciously acquired of Aunt Sadie. Sherman hesitated for just a moment, glancing savagely at Elmer, then stepped back with a bow, and Elmer bore off his captive in triumph. Sherman stood with a scowling brow throughout that dance, watching Myrtle as she went her graceful way through the prescribed form of the dance. She, too, was observing him anxiously. He was a rough, impetuous youngster, she knew, with a temper all the more violent because seldom aroused. She gloried in that fierce spirit which she could quell with one soft word or glance.

She came to him at once, the dance over. Elmer tried to turn her towards the conservatory, Sherman saw, but Myrtle shook her head decidedly and came on. Again she withdrew her hand from Elmer's arm and placed it in that of Sherman, looking at him with the prettiest air of propitiation. Elmer did not go away as he should in common politeness have done, but remained standing in front of them, rubbing his smooth chin and gazing unwaveringly at Myrtle. Sherman tried to stare him out of countenance, but Elmer would not so much as look at him. Myrtle glanced from one to the other in a kind of wonder. Until that moment she had, perhaps, never thought of Elmer in the light of a possible suitor. She had always thought of him as Rosie's lover and future husband, but now the truth dawned upon her. Elmer was seeking to rival Sherman! She drew closer to Sherman, and with a movement full of womanly grace and dignity, placed herself by his side.

"Come, Myrtle," said Sherman; and, turning his back upon the other with exaggerated rudeness, he led the girl into the drawing-room. Elmer followed, muttering curses. He encountered Rosie's eyes as he stepped into the drawing-room. He approached her.

"Why don't you dance?" he said, frowning.

"I will, Elmer," said Rosie, rising eagerly, "with you."

"Of course," he said, impatiently, "but you ought to dance with others."

"I would, Elmer," said Rosie, humbly, "only I thought you might not like it."

"What folly," he said. "Come on."

He led her away. Sherman caught a glimpse of her face in passing. It was radiant with happiness.

"What is it, Sherman?" said Myrtle, sweetly. "Have I displeased you by dancing with Elmer?"

"What lovely eyes!" replied Sherman, gazing deeply into them. "They are like heaven to me."

"I am sorry if I have offended you," said Myrtle, casting down the lovely eyes demurely, "but having seen you entering the conservatory in such charming company I thought that you were spending your time too happily to mind what I was doing."

"Hush, sweetheart," said Sherman, with a look of pain. "Are you enjoying yourself very much?"

"Very much, Sherman."

"Because I'm tired of it all and want to cut away. Aunt Sadie and Uncle Winfield have gone."

"So they have," said Myrtle, looking around for them.

"Do you care to stay, Myrtle?"

"I do so love to dance, Sherman," said Myrtle, beseechingly.

"Well, I'll stay on one condition—that you dance every number with me."

"But look at my card, Sherman."

"Ah, your card, to be sure," said Sherman, coolly appropriating it.

"But that's wicked, Sherman," cried Myrtle, blushing and laughing.

"Mind, you've lost your card, and you're to talk to no one but me. If you disobey me I'll carry you home at once."

Myrtle laughed gayly, and they joined the merry throng in the ball-room. For two long hours they

danced or strolled about together, arm in arm. Sherman was silent for the most part, silent and pensive. That brief contact with Clara had moved him to the soul, stirring to the depths his passion whose emanation enfolded Myrtle about, intoxicating the girl. When anyone approached to claim a promised dance, Sherman blandly informed him of the deplorable loss of Myrtle's card, and ere the indignant claimant could voice his remonstrance, he would carry Myrtle away. Myrtle laughed until she cried. Elmer was twice defrauded thus.

"Card's lost," Sherman said in a tone of deep sympathy. "Come along, Myrtle, we'll go search for it."

"Never mind the card," said Elmer upon the second occasion. "The dance is mine."

"Oh, but Myrtle's card is lost, my dear boy. We'll have to find it and compare notes."

"I wouldn't care to dance with you," said Myrtle, looking away with flushed cheeks, "unless I was *quite* sure."

"Of course not," declared Sherman, firmly. "Might be mistaken. Come along, Myrtle, we'll look in the drawing-room. I'm almost sure you lost it there."

Weak and exhausted from laughing and dancing and constant running about, Myrtle willingly prepared for home along towards the wee sma' hours when the fun was at its height. Sherman's arm soon found its way around the slender waist as they walked slowly homeward, and remained there unrebuked. They paused beneath the shelter of the giant oak beside the small verandah, paused, loath to enter and thus cut short their bliss. Sherman, holding his sweetheart in close embrace, gazed long and lovingly into her beautiful eyes. The moon high up in the heavens looked down on them a silent witness.

What curious sights that pale, chaste moon has gazed upon, through its centuries of silent vigil! What transports of passion! What deeds of darkness! What crimes! What vices uncontrolled! What scenes of love and joy and bliss and human happiness, such as it now beholds! The lovely eyes returned the lover's gaze with a tenderness equal to his own; the lover bends still lower.

Timidly she withdraws, but he holds her captive in his arms. Her lips are parted, panting. Oh, will he dare? Lower, still lower the lover bends until—until the parted lips are closed and pressed in a lingering, long-drawn kiss.

For shame, Myrtle! You so wise, so strong of mind, so firm of purpose! *You* yielding your lips to lover's kisses! Ah, she was but a woman, a weak and loving woman transported into elysium by her stalwart lover's masterful embrace. She did try to withdraw from his arms, but he was very strong, nor would he abate a jot of strength to aid her weak resistance. So she lay for a while, blushing, almost swooning with joy in his arms, at his mercy. And the imperturbable moon beamed softly down upon them.

"Let me go, Sherman," she said, at last, confused, dismayed beyond all telling. For was not she dedicated to the Cause?

"No!" Very firmly he said it, closing her lips with rare presence of mind, so that she could not protest even faintly.

And she had prided herself on her power over him! A word, a look, had heretofore been sufficient to restrain him in his most ardent moments. But now!

"Please, Sherman, let me go!" she implored tremulously.

"Not until you tell me something," he replied in manful tones.

"Sherman, I am very angry!"

"I don't believe it."

"What would Papa—Aunt Sadie, say?"

"Both sound asleep."

"Let me go. Oh, Sherman, I never would have believed it of you. Never!"

"Neither would I," said Sherman, grinning.

"You used to be so good."

"I've got over that."

"And patient."

"Patience is a virtue I much admire—in others."

"And gentle, oh, so gentle!"

"Could anything be more gentle than this, my sweet?" Once more the lips were closed and pressed gently indeed, but none the less with ardor.

Now, this was very bad and lawless of him. Myrtle saw all her cherished supremacy vanishing, melting away, for his surprising masterfulness so suddenly revealed was very, very sweet, and she felt herself yielding more and more to the weakness born of womanly passion.

"Come, confess, darling."

"Confess what? Please, Sherman."

"That you love me. Do you?"

"I do. I do. Now let me go."

Then he released her, but retained her hands in his and bent down and kissed them, the rogue, with a hypocritical show of humility.

She snatched them away with a charming little "Oh!" and fled, half-laughing, half-crying, into the house.

Sherman strutted to and fro in a tempest of passion and elation. He gazed up at the moon, smiling triumphantly; and bestowing a wink upon that placid orb by way of appreciation and understanding, he turned to go in, when lo, Myrtle stood before him.

She came close up to him and placed her hands upon his breast.

"I didn't mean to run away, Sherman," she said, softly. "I've come back to you. I do love you dearly."

Oh, Myrtle, where now are all those dreams, those cherished dreams of yesterday? Equality? Bah! Emancipation? Away! One kiss out of the thousand impressed upon those trembling lips outbalances the loss of all!

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHICH OUR HERO TAKES HIS FLIGHT.

What Sherman had said to Clara about going away was no idle form of speech. He had thought much of late, and knew—or thought he knew—that however dearly Myrtle loved him, she would not willingly marry for a long time to come. She was a very strong-minded young woman and passionately devoted to her work. She would not take upon herself the absorbing duties of wife and motherhood until her passion for the Cause had abated. How could she do justice to the Cause with a husband and children to love and care for? How could she fulfil her duties as wife and mother without neglecting the Cause? One cannot serve two masters. Thus Myrtle reasoned and Sherman, who had studied his dear girl to some purpose, knew her mind well.

And this state of things might continue for years. It certainly would continue while he remained at home. She would go on as now indefinitely, content to have the dear one near her, satisfied with a word of love, a look, a smile. But he was not. He had lived a rarely virtuous life until now, but he was not made of stone or wood or iron. He was a young man, full-blooded, strong and manly. He had his passions like other men; he longed to mate him with his mate, and felt that he could no longer continue purely under one roof with the dear object of his desires. She was too near him in the body, too far away in the spirit. He must away and at once.

And to this was now added another reason imperatively demanding his flight. He could not subject Clara to the hourly humiliation which his continued presence would cause her. She would, he knew, be deeply mortified when passion gave way to sober reason once more. His absence would be a great relief to her, and to ease her mind was the least that he could do, and so tossing

and tumbling through the night he determined upon his course.

There was really nothing now to hold him. He was but a burden on the good old General. Uncle Winfield, however, erroneously considered him too young and unsettled in mind to entrust the Works to him; Myrtle had at last owned her love, thus forever banishing uncertainty from his mind. But oh! there was Aunt Sadie! Aunt Sadie who loved him so dearly, so purely and passionately. How could he leave Aunt Sadie? It was utterly impossible. He had on one or two occasions made casual mention of a possible flight, and the look of woe, of absolute terror that had leaped to her eyes, blanching her cheeks and lips, had moved him to the soul. But it must be done. It would not be so hard after a time. It was the parting that he dreaded, that and breaking the news of his purpose to the loving woman.

He tossed and tumbled through the night, unable to close his eyes in slumber thinking of all these things. It was not until dawn that he sank into an uneasy sleep, and it was very late in the day when he came downstairs, but Aunt Sadie was there waiting for him, with that loving smile, and the look of pride and joy that he knew so well. But there was something more added this morning. She came to meet him with even more of pride and gladness, and a look of secret glee and exultation.

"I'm so proud of my boy," she said, kissing him.

"Why Auntie?" asked Sherman.

"Oh, I know!" cried Aunt Sadie, sinking into her chair and bursting into delighted laughter. "I know! I know!" she said again, and again, her bright eyes looking out of her flushed face with a look so knowing that Sherman easily surmised the cause of her mirth. He had stood with Myrtle directly beneath Aunt Sadie's window last night, and knowing that she always waited up for him, he did not doubt that she had overheard all.

"Oh, you wicked Auntie," he cried, gayly. "You heard us, did you? Then why did you not give me my good-night kiss? I assure you I hardly slept a wink last night thinking of it."

"I did not want you to know that I had overheard you," said Aunt Sadie. "And, oh dear, I didn't mean to tell you now, only I'm so proud of my boy and so delighted with Myrtle. Oh, I knew it would be so! I always said so; ask Winfield. Oh dear, oh dear, how I did laugh. I could not sleep for laughing, I was so delighted."

"You dear sweet Auntie," said Sherman, tenderly. "And now I've got to tell you something that will rob you of half your delight," he added, with a pang.

"What is it, darling?" said Aunt Sadie, quickly, but there was no need for him to answer. She read his purpose in his eyes. That which she had dreaded so long was now come. She pressed her hands to her heart and looked at him. Sherman sank on his knees beside her and kissed her hands.

"Tell me my own," she said, quietly, "do you wish to go away?"

"I must, Auntie," he replied, "there is nothing for it. You know Auntie what is the dearest wish of my life?"

"I know my love, and I was so happy last night thinking it so near to consummation."

"Not near, Auntie, but far—very far."

"Why—why—did not Myrtle avow her love, and is not that equal to a promise of marriage?"

"Yes, Auntie, but not necessarily a speedy marriage. Myrtle does not want to marry yet. She loves me and she will marry me some day, but now she is wrapped heart and soul in her Cause, and being a wise little woman she knows that she cannot with justice to that Cause assume the duties of wife, and possibly the cares of a mother; and she also fears that the new ties, should she assume them, will gradually wean her away from the Cause. She is a very single-minded little woman. She throws herself heart and soul into a thing until it becomes a passion, and being very earnest she is never without a grave purpose in life. As a child her passion was her father; then came her studies, which were followed by the Cause which now sways and colors every thought and effort of her life. Your loving boy hopes to supersede

the Cause some day, and he in all likelihood will have to give way to her children in time to come. You see, Auntie, I have studied Myrtle because my sole aim and object was to please and win her. I know her well and am prepared to wait in all patience for my happiness, knowing how great my reward will be in the end."

"And so I must lose my boy," said Aunt Sadie, with a deep sigh.

"My going will, I believe, hasten my happiness, Auntie. It will be great and it is worth waiting a million years for, but I don't want to wait quite that long. Myrtle is content in her love to continue for years as we are now going on, but Auntie I am not. If I go away for a while she will, I hope, miss me, and it may be that she will come to learn that I am even dearer to her than her beloved Cause. It may be a year, it may be two; but if I stay here, Auntie, it will be much longer."

"But I must lose you," said Aunt Sadie again. "I must lose my boy."

"Only for a time, Auntie. I will write to you every day—every single day, Auntie. May I go?"

"Yes," she replied, gently. She sighed again and then began to weep in that soft, silent way that is more touching than the most convulsive sobbing.

"When will you start, my own?" asked Aunt Sadie, after a time.

"Tomorrow, Auntie. As long as it must be, it may as well be at once."

"Yes, it will be best."

"Now, Auntie, I will go and tell Uncle Winfield," said Sherman.

Aunt Sadie let him go, and rising resolutely, she went about preparations for his departure. After all it was not so very bad this parting, when once you had made up your mind to it, and Aunt Sadie had been for some time prepared for a possible separation. Other young men went out into the world, leaving the home nest often never to return to it. Her boy, at least, would come back to her, and be better for the journey. Without doubt Winfield was right. A few years of travel, of

solitude and of worldly experience was most needful to the proper rounding out of his manly character. Strengthening her resolutions with such like reflections Aunt Sadie got through the day with only two or three irrepressible outbursts of weeping.

"I am not surprised," said Mr. Watterson, when Sherman had informed him of his purpose. "I've been expecting it from your late restlessness. Have you made any plans yet, my lad?"

"I propose to visit the principal American cities and places of historic interest before going abroad."

"That is a good idea. Go south, then east, through New England and Canada before sailing. I have a mission for you in the south. You must visit my brother-in-law, Mr. Curtis, in Maryland, and then I want you to go to Virginia in General Hamilton's behalf. He has an estate there which he abandoned after the war, as I have learned upon investigation. You must visit his relatives, and give me an idea of his Cousin Mainward's character, so that I shall know how to act."

"I am going to Chicago first, Uncle. I want to see Dillingham—unless you wish me to avoid him?"

"By no means," said Mr. Watterson, quickly. "Meet Dick, my lad, and meet him as a friend. He loves you."

"I'm afraid, Uncle, that will be impossible. I cannot meet a man in a friendly spirit who has permitted himself to utter such tirades against you as appear almost daily in the metropolitan papers. If I meet Dick," said the young man, flushing hotly, "I shall very forcibly express my opinion of him."

"In doing so my hot-headed boy you will be very foolish," said Mr. Watterson, reprovingly. "You do not read Dick's denunciations aright, my son. You permit your love for me to blind you. Look more closely and you will see that these tirades, as you call them, are really eulogies in disguise. The man under the guise of denouncing me is singing my praises from day to day. He declares that his sole reason for turning against me is that I am too honest, too upright, and he cites many instances to prove my unfitness for leader of a great political organ-

ization—because of my integrity of character. Why," added Mr. Watterson with rueful look, "I cannot in modesty read Dick's tirades any more. The man is, in my opinion, playing a deep game for a purpose of his own, but knowing Dick's love for me I cannot bring myself to believe that his purpose is to supersede me."

"Is it not possible, Uncle, that he may be uttering his true sentiments? That he wishes to depose you for the very reasons he cites?"

"It is possible, of course," said Mr. Watterson, in troubled tones. "However," he added, straightening his broad shoulders involuntarily, "you need have no fear for me. If Dick is really in earnest he will meet with the biggest surprise of his life at the Convention. I believe in Dick—but I'll keep my powder dry."

For another half hour they talked, arranging for future correspondence, and settling such matters as the young man's money allowance and manner of payment.

"I think it best for you to draw upon me as you need money," said Mr. Watterson, after mentioning various sums which were either too small in his opinion or too large in Sherman's. "In my college days I managed very easily on a thousand dollars a year, and lived in all things as befits a gentleman, but things have changed since then and you will, of course, adapt yourself to the prevailing standard. I can more easily allow you ten times the sum which my father in his day could afford to spend on me. Live like a gentleman, my son, wherever you go."

Sherman thanked his generous uncle, and then went with a heavy heart to his dear girl's study. She was sitting in a pensive attitude beside the window, but rose on his entrance and stood awaiting him, smiling a little, tremulously. She looked quite pale, and from her anxious expression as she regarded him he knew that she had been thinking deeply, and that the thoughts had been most disquieting. He advanced quickly and bent down and kissed her hand. He asked no more now than had been his before, and for this Myrtle was deeply grateful.

"Come and sit down, Myrtle," said Sherman, softly, "I have something to tell you."

He led her to a chair and, drawing up another, seated himself by her side.

"I may as well tell you at once, Myrtle," said the young man, gravely, "I am going away for a year or two, going to travel and see the world. You know it is my uncle's wish."

She looked at him in deep astonishment. This was so different from what she had expected that it almost deprived her of breath. Her cheeks became paler still, and her hand went to her heart to quiet its tumultuous beating.

"I know, dear, that you do not want to marry yet," continued Sherman. "You have said that you love me, and with that sweet assurance I am content to wait your will; but I cannot stay longer. It will be best for both of us to part for a while."

Still Myrtle did not trust herself to speak. Her hand continued to press hard against her bosom.

"You are devoted heart and soul to your Cause, but you will weary of it in time my love and then I shall come and claim you."

"You are going to leave us, Sherman!" faltered Myrtle. "Leave me!"

"Don't you want me to go, dear Myrtle?" cried Sherman, taking her in his arms for her greater comfort and his own.

"How can you leave me Sherman?" said Myrtle reproachfully. "I thought that—after—last—night—"

"What did you think sweet?" urged Sherman as she came to a pause with her face hidden against his shoulder.

"I thought—that—you—would—never leave me!" said Myrtle beginning to cry. After all she was a weak little creature. "I thought you came this morning to—to—oh! Sherman you cannot mean it?"

"But I do mean it my own. Do I not know you? How often have I heard you say that you would not marry for years to come?"

"But that was before—last—night," murmured Myrtle, smiling through her tears.

"What a dear, strange, adorable little woman," cried

the lover nearly beside himself with contending emotions as he gazed into her love-lit eyes, which were regarding him so tenderly, so sweetly, so modestly and yet with a queenly pride and dignity that moved him to the soul. Oh, for a raging lion to strangle in her presence! Oh, for an army of giants to dispute with him the favor of this precious girl!

"Don't go away, Sherman," said Myrtle softly.

"I must, Myrtle; I must go."

"Even when I ask you to stay, Sherman—darling?"

Now, this was very hard on Sherman, you must allow, and rather designing on Myrtle's part, who for so long had held him at arm's-length.

"Do you know what my staying means, Myrtle?" he asked, breathing hard and by sheer strength of will holding himself in his chair.

"I—I believe so," faltered Myrtle.

"And would you run counter to your own stern preachings? Sacrifice your own pet theories? Would you, Myrtle?"

"Would I what, Sherman?" she said demurely. "You have asked nothing yet—nothing worth answering."

"Would you marry me—at once?"

"If you really and truly wished it," she smiled archly in conclusion.

Sherman sat dumfounded. Far from expecting this abject surrender, he had come prepared to listen to pleadings for mercy, soft appeals for patience, and here this dear, incomprehensible little woman was almost pleading for that which but a little while before he was suing for in vain! He did not know that he had judged her aright—that up to the very moment of his coming she had been bitterly upbraiding herself for her precipitation in avowing her love, when she had determined not to marry for years to come. But so it was.

She had firmly resolved to represent the matter to him in its true light; tell him how impossible it was to marry now; but all her resolutions melted away with one glimpse of his eager face. This young man had held her in his arms, had kissed her lips, had conquered her absolutely and irrevocably. She belonged to him. He was the lord of her

heart, her love, her happiness, her king. What, argue with him—her lover and husband to be? Never! What was the Cause compared to her love? Nothing—less than nothing. So all her fine resolutions vanished like the snow before the sun, and she sat meekly down beside him, prepared to yield to him in everything. She sat now looking at him, all rosy with triumph, glorying in his surprise and her surrender, and not in the least doubting her victory.

Sherman sprang up in the greatest agitation and took a turn or two through the room. Here was the very happiness which he had prayed for offered to him, yet he hesitated. Nay, there was no hesitation. His resolution was taken; he would rise superior to selfish gratification; he would put his happiness from him. It would be for the best. The course which he had mapped out appeared to him to be the right one, and he resolved not to swerve from it. In the conflict between her heart and her intellect Myrtle's heart had for the time gained the ascendancy, triumphing over the aspirations of her strong mind; but in a few weeks, or at most months, when the cravings of her heart had in a measure been appeased, her powerful intellect would again assert itself and she would become unhappy. So Sherman believed, and he resolved not to take advantage of her womanly weakness. It was a struggle, however. A battle raged in his heart for some minutes—a battle between fierce desire and the right, but character triumphed over passion.

"Do you remember four or five years ago, Myrtle, when you were going to college," said Sherman, sitting down again by her side, "how eager you were to go and how distressed at the thought of leaving your father? You would have given over college—the dream of your life—out of love for your father, but he saved you from yourself at a heart-breaking sacrifice. Myrtle, I shall follow your father's example."

"You cannot, my Sherman," cried Myrtle, fairly putting her arms around his neck, and smiling roguishly into his eyes. "How *can* you when you love me so—when I love you so?"

It was again a desperate struggle to resist the coaxing lips so near his own, in fact, he could not resist them, but

though he pressed those lips tenderly and clasped his dear girl to his breast with ardor, still he held to his resolve.

"It is because I love you, Myrtle, that I do this. Do not look so reproachful, dear. Do you think it is an easy task for me to put aside the happiness I have waited for so long? To carry on the great work in which you are engaged requires entire devotion of time and attention. You are free now to devote yourself to it. Married, you would have to sacrifice the Cause to your husband, or your husband to the Cause. Either way you would be most unhappy. Another woman could continue blithely along with a slovenly eye on each, but not my little woman."

"Oh, Sherman," said Myrtle, sobbing, "I'm deeply disappointed in you."

"I'm sorry, darling, that it should be so, but indeed, dear Myrtle, I would be unworthy of your love if I yielded now. Some day the Cause will be of secondary importance to you, and I am willing to await the event."

"I—am—so—dreadfully—disappointed—in—you," was all the weeping girl would say.

But in her secret heart she knew that he was right, and owned with pride and joy his superior strength of character.

Oh, how weak she was! How puny! she who strove to lead her sex to heights unknown and unexplored! She was a child! A very infant! All her life she had been surrounded by stronger spirits than her own. All her life she had been protected, guarded against her own rash acts. What inconceivable blunders she would have committed but for their tender care! First her father, then Richard, and now Sherman! Was it then true? Were all women so weak? All men so strong? She was a woman of intellect higher than most, but however high the aspiration of her mind, she had followed her heart at every crisis of her life. Sherman took her in his arms and kissed her tears away.

"I must go, Myrtle," he said, and there were tears in his own eyes now. "There is no other way; but though you are disappointed in me now, you do love me, Myrtle?"

"So dearly, Sherman!"

"And you will think of me when I am gone?"

"I will, I will!"

"You will never love any one but me, will you, Myrtle?"

"No, Sherman, no. I love you only," she cried. "Oh, don't go away, my own! Don't leave me."

Her arms were around his neck once more, and her beautiful eyes looking into his own shone with tears, but Sherman shook his head, and again declared that it must be so. He talked long and earnestly, and by dwelling upon the glories of her Cause and the happiness of a future reunion, he gradually won her to smiling once more.

When Aunt Sadie came in along toward noon, Myrtle looked so radiantly happy, sitting by her lover's side with her arms around his neck, that the good lady cried out, thinking the dear girl had persuaded her darling boy to forego his proposed flight. But Myrtle recalled to earth again by Aunt Sadie's presence, threw herself weeping into the elder lady's arms, and they had a good cry together, which somehow gave them greater strength and courage.

Sherman saw but one of his many friends that day. General Hamilton, coming late in the evening, heard with deep regret the young man's resolution, but he highly applauded it.

"Eve'y gentleman should travel, suh," said the General. "Getting away from the women a while of itself will be of great benefit to you."

But what between his love for Aunt Sadie and his passion for Myrtle, the sorrow of the one and the woe of the other, poor Sherman was driven nearly distracted with contending emotions, and were it not for the haunting thought of Clara, it is more than likely that he would have thrown precaution to the winds and have stayed at home forever tied to the apron-strings of those loving women.

Myrtle clung to him during those last few hours with the abandon of a child. She had long resisted him, and the thought now preyed upon her, filled her with the keenest self-reproach. She told herself that if she had been more loving, the dear one would not now be leaving her. It was all her fault. In her selfish absorption in her work, she had neglected the man who loved her, and, as if to make amends for that long neglect, she clung to him now with passionate

tenderness. Sherman had really never known Myrtle before. Beneath the calm, serene exterior which stern convention imposes she concealed a nature as passionate as his own.

In place of the strong-minded young woman, sternly upholding her rights against the tyrant man, was now a humble, adoring, weak little creature, declaring that she could not live without him, her dearest, her darling, her own. The queenly young lady who had graciously permitted him to kiss her hand, the hem of her gown; who had imperiously commanded his attendance or capriciously denied herself to him, had given place to a tender, loving, passionate girl, whose arms seemed by nature formed to lie snugly around his neck, whose eyes looked into his with meek submission.

"You will always love me, Sherman?" she asked imploringly. "You will think of me when you are gone?"

Sherman's tender assurances comforted her and made her very happy.

He spent the evening in his uncle's study, where Myrtle and Aunt Sadie joined them, and where they remained until long past midnight. Aunt Sadie wept all night, and Myrtle came down in the morning with eyes all red and swollen, and though both tried to appear cheerful in the face of the impending separation, it was all in vain. The tears would come unbidden, and so the morning was very sad to all. It was in vain for Mr. Watterson to smile and declare that they ought rather to rejoice than repine; had Sherman been going to war these two foolish women could not have betrayed greater grief and woe.

In the very hour of parting, as they stood together in the parlor, General Hamilton was announced, and presently the old warrior came marching in, with Daniel at his heels. The young negro wore a mighty grin, and the whites of his eyes when he turned his glance upon Sherman rolled alarmingly.

"Boy," said the General, when greetings had been exchanged. "Have you provided yo'self with a su'vant, suh?"

"A servant, General?"

"Yes, suh—a body su'vant. I see, suh, that you have not."

"No, General, I've never felt the need of a servant," Sherman replied, laughing. "I guess I can take care of myself now as always."

"Wrong, suh. Eve'y gentleman should have a pu'sonal attendant, suh, and especially when sta'ting on his travels should he provide himself with a faithful nigra, suh. What, suh! Are you a nobody to sta't off in this haphaza'd mannah? Foh shame, suh. Who is to run yo' erants? black yo' boots? brush yo' clothes? and attend to all the thousand and one troublesome details that arise from day to day as yo' jo'ney onward? Yo'self? Faugh! 'Tis not to be thought of. No gentleman, suh, should bu'den his mind with such mattahs, nor stoop to pufawm menial offices. Daniel, you black rascal," concluded the General, flourishing his cane. "Stand fo'th!"

Daniel advanced a step, glaring in mingled wonder and alarm at his master.

"Here, boy," continued the old warrior placidly. "I make you a present of him."

"A—a—present!" gasped Sherman.

Myrtle clapped her hands delightedly, and Aunt Sadie began to crow, despite her aching heart. Mr. Watterson shook with silent laughter. The General beamed upon them all and delightedly tugged at his imperial.

"Yes, suh," he said. "Daniel shall attend upon you. He has been trained in all the duties of a body su'vant—trained, suh, by his fatha', who fo' sixty yeahs has attended upon me pu'sonally. A caning now and then until he shall have arrived at yeahs of discretion is all he will requiah. Daniel, this young gentleman is now yo' mastah."

"Yes, sah," gasped Daniel.

"You belong to him—are his pu'sonal propu'ty. Undahstand?"

"Yes, Massa Dave. Ah undahstand, sah," stammered Daniel.

"Su've him faithfully in all things, and he will prove a kind mastah to you."

"Hope to die, Massa Dave!" cried Daniel, rolling his eyes. "Hope to die this yere minute, sah, if I—"

"That will do," rasped out the General, curtly. "Go about yo' duties at once."

"But look here, General," protested Sherman, "this will never do, you know."

"What, suh?" cried the General, glaring. "What will never do, boy?"

"Sherman doesn't want to carry the lad off on such short notice," interposed Mr. Watterson, with a warning glance at Sherman.

"Bah! nonsense, suh," cried the General. "Mam Sue is wild with joy, and Benjy when he lu'ned my pu'pose began to capah like a colt. They have given Daniel tha'h blessing and he is ready to sta'ht at once. No mo' wo'ds, suh; the boy is yo's. Yo' hand!"

He grasped the young man's hand and shook it warmly.

"Good-bye, boy," he said, softly. "I wish you a happy jo'ney, suh."

With a last warm hand pressure, they parted; the General shouldered his cane and marched away, Sherman following his tall, elegant figure with wet eyes.

"What shall I do, Uncle?" queried Sherman, with a glance at Daniel, who stood ready at the door with a grip in each hand and a grin that spread to his ears.

"Do? Why, take him along, to be sure. The General is quite right. The boy's services will come in handy, you'll find. If he doesn't strive to please," concluded the big man, in a terrible voice, "feed him to the lions."

"Oh, Marse Majah," murmured Daniel, with bulging eyes.

"I think he's nice," cried Myrtle, an opinion in which Aunt Sadie coincided.

"So be it," said Sherman, "and now, my dear, dear Aunt Sadie. Myrtle, my own precious darling. It is farewell, Uncle. Until we meet again."

He held wide his arms and they flung themselves upon him.

"Be good, darling," murmured Aunt Sadie, "and return to us pure in heart as you go."

"Be true, my own," whispered Myrtle, sobbing on his breast.

"Guard my treasure, Auntie," he replied, placing her in Aunt Sadie's arms. "So long, Uncle."

He was gone. They saw him cross the lawn with Daniel at his heels, caught the last wave of his hand, and once more the two loving women sank into each other's arms weeping until they could weep no more.

And so Sherman left his home and his happiness behind him and went out into the world, kicking himself figuratively speaking, for an ass, but with the proud consciousness at bottom that the course he had taken was the only right and manly one.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCERNS ITSELF CHIEFLY WITH MYRTLE.

Aunt Sadie's friends looked in vain for her for some days after her boy's departure. She remained strictly at home, going about in corners, weeping her poor eyes and nose red. This continued until Sherman's first letter arrived. It was such a loving letter; it breathed such tenderness for her, and undying devotion, that Aunt Sadie forgot her grief and started out upon her rounds, carrying the precious epistle in her bosom. She brought it forth whereever she went to show it to her friends and to read certain passages aloud, especially those bearing upon his deep love for her. She laughed with great glee at their exclamations of wonder over a boy so good and pure and loving.

There was a little note enclosed in the letter, for Myrtle, into which, though it lay open to her eyes, Aunt Sadie would not have peeped for worlds. She carried it to Myrtle with an air so mysterious and important that she quite frightened that young lady. And in many of her boy's subsequent letters there was a little note enclosed, which Aunt Sadie conveyed to Myrtle with great secrecy and delight.

"A little note from my boy, my love," she would say, looking away carefully, so as not to embarrass the dear child.

"Thank you, Auntie," Myrtle would reply, blushing with delight.

There was not much in these little notes to be sure. "I love you, Myrtle," or "I love my Myrtle, dearly," or words to that effect, but Myrtle kissed them and cried over them, no doubt, and treasured them every one; and sometimes answered them with notes as brief but words of similar import. Aunt Sadie, who deeply loved a romance insisted on making a great secret of it all. She would come to Myrtle as unconcernedly as possible, and, placing her letter on the girl's desk, she would go tip-toeing out again, and

half an hour later, return to find Myrtle's little note enclosed. She would then mail it with her own hands, not trusting it, mind you, to the mail-bag into which the ordinary letters were placed for the carrier, but conveying it in person to the postoffice in order to speed its safe departure.

"For my boy," she would say if it was Mr. Shuttleworth, the postmaster, who was an old family friend. Or "Will you please see that this letter goes out by the first train?" if in Mr. Shuttleworth's absence, she had to treat with the young man at the window.

He was so terribly haughty, that young man, that Aunt Sadie became dreadfully afraid of him. Her tone sank to a tone of timid supplication in preferring her request. And the impatient way in which the ill-conditioned cub snatched the precious missive from her hand and hurled it into the box with the other letters, quite took her breath away. She was greatly troubled by this young man's surly discourtesy, and she cast about in her mind for a means of conciliating so important a medium between herself and boy. She ended by inviting him with Mr. Shuttleworth to a Sunday dinner, and was so kind to him when he came, and so attentive and courteous, that she quite won his heart, and when next she approached his window with a letter, he not only handled it more tenderly, but stamped it before her very eyes, and placed it with a bundle of other Chicago-bound letters in a great bag. Days and weeks passed, but every single day of every week brought Aunt Sadie a letter. Sometimes it was a long letter, full of humorous descriptions of men and things, sometimes it was only a little note bearing a thousand kisses, but never a day passed without a word from her adoring boy. She did not write so frequently, not having the time, but once a week at least she wrote to her boy and so all things considered, she was very happy.

Myrtle, however, was very sad and lonely. She missed her dear lover's bright face and the thousand little endearing attentions with which he had surrounded her. She even lost much interest in her work, and all her writings for weeks afterwards bore unmistakable evidence of her sentimental mood of mind. Her readers must have been

very greatly astonished at the melancholy tinge imparted to her essays about this time. The poor girl indeed would much rather have composed sentimental ditties than the stuff which she was expected to turn out from week to week.

She had little to say in those days about woman's status, less about her rights, and nothing at all about the longed-for ballot. She insisted tearfully that woman was necessary to man and man to woman, whereas at an earlier period her attitude had given rise to more than a suspicion that in the opinion of the fair essayist the world could get along very well without the sterner sex. To be sure this opinion had been considerably modified as time passed, and she grew deeper and deeper in love with her dear Sherman, but in her softest moods she had never dreamed of making such an acknowledgment as the above.

She expatiated on woman's beautiful devotion to man, citing many examples in point, not to prove, mind you, that women were, therefore, entitled to the ballot, but merely to uphold a contention that she was a not unworthy partner of the lordly being who condescended to consort with her. She was very humble indeed, and disposed to think that mere man had conducted mundane affairs very tolerably, considering all things. She even seemed to think that it would not at all be a bad thing to permit him to hold the reins a little while longer. She dwelt, too, on the wife's devotion to her husband and, I am afraid, shocked her stronger-minded sisters not a little by emphatically declaring that the wife should in all practical matters defer to her husband as a being not only more experienced, but naturally wiser than she. Nay, she went even further, and to the horror of her stronger-minded associates above mentioned, she absolutely declared the wife to be the weaker vessel, dependent upon her husband not only for material support, but for all the happiness of life. It was, in a word, an abject surrender.

She blushes now a good deal and places her hands over her ears, shaking her head with great vehemence when her mischievous husband brings forth these articles (which he has carefully preserved) and begins in a solemn voice to

read to her, her own expressed opinions of a wife's duties to her husband and his natural superiority.

But this weakness did not last long. She came around presently, and her effusions became more powerful than ever. Requests for contributions began to pour in from leading periodicals, invitations to lecture before women's clubs in various parts of the country came. She accepted all of the first, and as many of the last as was consistent with her literary labors. She gained fame as a lecturer as well as a writer. Her name began to figure in the newspapers as a personage, her utterances gave grave editorial writers food for solemn comment. She liked this semi-public life, liked to read criticisms of her writings and was not at all displeased with the savage attacks made upon her Cause. They at least served to bring the matter before the public, the great common people, and that was above all things what she desired. It hurt her at first to be called erratic, flighty, to be classed with the "short-haired female cranks trotting over the globe like unyoked sheep," as one editor characterized that noble band of women working for the Cause. These things wounded her grievously, but reflecting that these utterances were purely inspired by bigotry or ignorance, she smiled and read the article through to the end without more than a furtive tear or two.

"Don't mind, my dear," her father said, "these tirades show that the Cause is gaining headway. The thing that awakens bitter animosity is half won. It is only a matter of time when victory will be yours. This kind of comment shows that my child is really becoming a power."

Such words from her father filled her with rapture, and she returned to her work with renewed hope and courage. She missed her dear lover sorely, but certainly since his departure she had developed a power greater than she had ever before declared. Her effusions were more brilliant, stronger and more powerful in argument and in execution. This was, no doubt, in part due to the fact that she could now concentrate all her intellectual faculties on her work, and in part because she applied herself more earnestly in order to still her womanly grief and drown her loneliness. Whatever the cause, she was in every way improved, of

which fact she was perhaps herself unconscious until it was brought home to her in an unmistakable manner.

The foremost of American magazines, an eastern periodical of international renown, in arranging a symposium on a matter of world-wide moment, urgently requested a contribution from her on the question under discussion. The list of names submitted amazed her. She was asked to join in open debate with stars of the first magnitude, with men and women, the acknowledged leaders of thought. She carried the letter to her father and showed it to him with tears of joy in her eyes, which were reflected in his own as he read the glorious missive which, in effect, declared his daughter the equal of any of these earnest leaders. It was not a question bearing directly upon Woman's Suffrage, but it had to do with politics, and Myrtle was a young woman who could be trusted to bring it to bear upon her dearly loved Cause. She accepted the offer thankfully, and went to work with a will. Her father was of much assistance to her in preparing her paper. His mind was a perfect storehouse of political lore; she had but to go to him to clear up any doubtful point in history or in the matter of historical precedent. He went over the paper carefully when it was completed, but could find no flaw either in its reasoning or execution. The publication of that article along with the others attracted widespread interest and established Myrtle's fame as the supreme exponent in that peculiar field to which she had dedicated her powers.

Mr. Watterson was very proud of his daughter, but still he could not bring himself to enter into serious discussion with her. She was to him first a sweet, adorable child, and, second, a woman too pure and sacred to his mind to engage in matters so gross. Myrtle understood her father too well now to grieve over what in earlier days she had regarded as a lack of confidence in her. She understood him now, and when she desired information on any point in politics or political history she wrote out her questions on paper with her reasons for asking them, and placed the matter upon his desk, and in a day or two he would hand her a fat package containing the answer with everything bearing upon the matter from every possible

point of view. She found that this gave him great pleasure, and she forthwith set him tasks without number, and so discussing grave questions in writing, and in ordinary conversation employing soft words of love and terms of endearment these two loving hearts continued happily along.

With all her duties as writer and lecturer, Myrtle never neglected her home club, although she had long ago given over the idea of forming a gigantic Women's Union. The thing was impossible she found. She could not but see that her girl friends attended the meetings for companionship sake, rather than to listen to serious discussion. She was herself too true a woman to find fault with them for that which was so natural to their blooming years. She found herself yielding more and more to the genial atmosphere of camaraderie wrought by social intercourse, and it was often with a strong feeling of reluctance that she brought the gavel down, interrupting the merry chatter around her, and bringing woe into eyes a moment before bright with animation and warm with feeling of good fellowship.

She was greatly troubled about Clara and Rosie. Clara came very seldom to the club in these days, although she had been its most enthusiastic member in the beginning. She never visited Myrtle now, and when they met by chance her greeting was very cold. Myrtle knew not the cause of this alteration in her erstwhile warm and open-hearted friend. All her efforts towards a better understanding were repulsed by Clara. So Myrtle, finding her repeated endeavors in vain, tossed her head proudly and passed Clara by with a glance as haughty as her own. Clara's coldness troubled her, but Rosie's seclusion worried her more. She knew no cause of offense against Clara, but she doubted her innocence of wronging little Rosie. Rosie never came to the meetings now at all. She had quit Murly's, and she remained steadfastly at home, although she was not at all ill, she declared. Myrtle had called at the little white cottage several times, and Rosie had on each occasion received her in the darkened bed chamber. They had embraced with their usual warm affection, but Rosie somehow was different; she was more constrained in her bearing towards

her friend. Myrtle thought she knew the cause of Rosie's pale cheeks and swollen eyes. Elmer had altogether ceased his attentions to Rosie, and he had become most attentive to her. He called at the old ivy-grown mansion every evening in the week. He was openly devoted to Myrtle. Aunt Sadie noticed it, and she felt properly indignant on account of her boy. Mr. Watterson noticed it and he was troubled. He had never liked Elmer. The boy's saucy pertness grated on this grave, sensitive man, and the grace and elegance of the young man was more than offset by his notorious depravity which could not but make him abhorrent to a mind so pure as Mr. Watterson's. To see this young reprobate in familiar intercourse with his daughter pained him exceedingly. Urged on by Aunt Sadie he gently broached the subject to Myrtle one morning.

"I cannot help it, Papa," said Myrtle, blushing. "He will come, though goodness knows, I do not encourage him."

"But you can tell him you are engaged to my boy," said Aunt Sadie, with heat. "You are not true to Sherman when you permit the attentions of another in his absence."

"How can you say so, Auntie," cried Myrtle, indignantly. "You know how I desired our engagement made public from the beginning, but Sherman would not permit it, saying in his dear, silly way that he left me free until his return."

"But Elmer must be told."

"Then do you tell him for me, Auntie. But no; say nothing. Perhaps I can bring him back to little Rosie. That is what I am trying to do, Auntie, and you should help me instead of scolding me."

So the matter rested. Elmer was permitted to call, but Myrtle rarely saw him alone. Either Aunt Sadie was in the room with them, or her father, and this by her contrivance, as the young man could not fail to see. But he was not easily discouraged, and indeed saw nothing discouraging in this. It must not be supposed that Elmer's attentions were wholly displeasing to Myrtle. On the contrary, she was pleased, as any other young woman would have been pleased at the gallant young man's courtesies.

Nor did she consider her acceptance of them at all inconsistent with her faith to Sherman. In her letters to her lover she told him of her social doings, and teased him a great deal about a certain young man whom she would not name, and in reply Sherman delivered himself of very terrible threats against the young man should he ever meet with him, but his faith in his sweetheart was clearly as boundless as his love. Elmer certainly was very amusing. She could not help laughing at the young fellow's droll discourse. She enjoyed his society very much, and were it not for the preying thought of poor little Rosie pining at home, she would have been as happy as a young woman well can be whose true love is far from her side. Elmer's attentions were all the more welcome because young fellows rather avoided Myrtle, fearful, perhaps, of coming off haltingly in ordinary converse with a creature so intellectual. These fears were ungrounded. However grave in her study Myrtle was as gay and loving and girlish outside of it as any of her young companions, though not as thoughtless perhaps or as much given to inane chatter. She could not help a mocking smile when some empty-headed ass of the male persuasion assumed airs of superiority towards herself and her sisters, but she would not willingly have wounded the vanity of even such a creature.

Elmer, without doubt, was improved in every way. He was as industrious now and sober as he had formerly been idle and depraved; no more staying out at nights until the wee small hours of the morning. No more drinking and carousing with boon companions; the under world of the town knew him no more. All this change was wrought through Myrtle's growing influence over him. She was glad of Elmer's reform, glad for his sake and for Rosie's sake. She did as much as any young woman could do to encourage him in his promising course. She did not dream, however, that the alteration in him was due solely to her. She was a modest young woman; her mirror told her that she was not an extraordinarily beautiful one; she could not fancy any other young man in love with her save Sherman, her dear lover, who had loved her since her early girlhood. Least of all did she believe that Elmer entertained

a passion for her. It was only a passing fancy with him. She was so different in character from him; he was so indifferent to her that she could not believe in a lasting love on his part.

But Elmer was, in fact, deeply and enduringly in love with Myrtle. She was just the woman to attract and hold a man of his weak and vacillating character, after mere beauty had palled upon him. Her purity filled him with the greatest reverence and awe; her little dainty graces charmed him, her strong personality appealed powerfully to him; her intellect, her gravity, her sweet womanliness, all won his admiration, because these were qualities which he eminently lacked. He was not intellectual, nor grave, nor manly; he was a nonentity. She was a paragon, and he set himself earnestly to win her. He did not dream that his past depravity had lowered him in her eyes; having learned from experience that a reputation such as he had acquired rather increased his attractions in the eyes of good women.

He was received everywhere. The most prudent of mamas entrusted their daughters to him. They tapped him on the arm and called him a naughty fellow. Papas laughed and clapped him proudly on the shoulder. "You wild dog!" they said, chuckling. Daughters peeped at him shyly and giggled when he approached them. He was a general favorite, and this he was inclined to think was not in spite of, but because of his depravity. But Myrtle was somehow different from the others. She did not giggle nor withdraw invitingly when he approached her. She did not blush when he whispered sweet nothings in her ear. She knew the value of such whisperings, and did not seek for a hidden meaning in the young man's words. She received him with calm dignity and a composure that awed him; her pure glance seemed to go clear through him; he felt humbled in her presence—chastened; his assurance fled. He talked gayly and drolly as usual, but his talk was not the same as that which he employed with other girls. He saw her lips curl at his insinuations and he ceased complimenting her. In his intercourse with other young women, and women of good repute, he allowed himself a certain license, saying

things and making droll allusions which called up blushes and spasmodic gigglings. It was only Elmer—wild, untamable—Elmer, of whom such things were to be expected, and so he said what he pleased to them, but with Myrtle he never permitted himself the slightest liberty. He was respectful in conversation and reverential in manner. Her very presence exacted this tribute. That was why he loved her. He gloried in her superiority and exulted secretly in the ultimate possession of a treasure so priceless. For he did not doubt his ultimate success. He had feared Sherman, but he believed firmly that that young man's precipitate departure was owing to his rejected suit. And in whose favor had she rejected him if not in his? No other young man courted her. She was left to him by a kind of tacit understanding. He was rich, handsome, of good standing, he was not a bad fellow; he had always been eminently successful with women, so he not unnaturally felt that his chances of winning Myrtle were very bright and constantly growing brighter. She smiled upon him, laughed at his drolleries, accepted his attentions and seemed very happy in his company; all of which encouraged in him dreams of future bliss.

One thing troubled him, however. She talked of him and Rosie as if they belonged to each other.

"Rosie is very unhappy," she persisted in saying.

"How can I help it, Myrtle?" he would say reproachfully, "she is nothing to me; she never was."

Myrtle could not believe this. He had courted Rosie for long, and she insisted that he had no right now to withdraw, having won the young girl's affections. She was sure that Rosie loved him and she did everything in her power to bring the two once more together.

"Rosie is very unhappy," she would say, accusingly. "Why don't you go to see her?"

It was in vain for him to protest that he could not help Rosie's unhappiness; that he cared nothing about it, and that Rosie was nothing to him. She persisted in saying the same things over and over again. She repeated it all one evening when he had called as usual to see her, and for a wonder found her alone. Mr. Watterson was down town

and Aunt Sadie had been called out half an hour before his arrival by one of her friends.

"It is unkind of you, Myrtle, to talk to me of Rosie, as if she were anything to me," he said.

"But why is she so unhappy? You should not have encouraged her, sir, if you mean to desert her now. Have you quarreled?"

"No; am I the only man that has called on her? I know a dozen young fellows who would willingly go with her if she would let them. I went to see her—yes; and I took her about a good deal, but I have the right to cease my attentions when I choose, as she has the right to disown them."

Myrtle looked very thoughtful at this, and Elmer sat regarding her with deep anxiety and with glances of passionate devotion. It was his first real love and it was very deep. She looked so pure and sweet and womanly, sitting there in her modest grey gown, with her pale, thin, sweet face framed in its glossy auburn hair, that he with difficulty restrained a desire to throw himself at her feet and pour out his passion then and there. It was the strangest thing to him that he should love this quiet, pensive girl. The feeling which she inspired in him was widely different from that which other women of greater physical beauty had aroused. He wanted to kneel to her, to kiss her hands, the hem of her gown; her mere presence chastened him, made a better man of him.

"Why should you think that Rosie's seclusion is owing to me?" he asked, slowly; "don't you notice that it dates exactly from the time of Sherman's departure? They were very close friends."

Myrtle looked at him in great indignation. It was unpardonable of him to suppose that her dear Sherman could love any one but herself.

"No, no," she said, frowning, "Sherman is her friend as he is the friend of everybody who knows him. That is all. You called on her—"

"Well, I'm not calling on her now," said Elmer, impatiently.

"I wish you were with all my heart," said Myrtle, frankly.

"Now, Myrtle, that was unkind."

"So it was, Elmer, and I'm sorry; but I am so unhappy on Rosie's account."

"I may be obliged to go away very shortly," said Elmer, waving the distasteful subject from him. "Daddy has an important plan mapped out which will require much traveling about. He cannot go himself, and he must have a personal representative. I have been thinking of undertaking it. I shall possibly visit Chicago, New York and London. You would not think that our business connections extend to London now?"

"I am not surprised at anything when Mr. Marblemore is concerned," Myrtle replied.

"I shall probably remain away several months," said Elmer; "will you miss me, Myrtle?"

"Surely, Elmer. You have been very kind to me."

"Kind? It is you who are kind in permitting me to be near you," said Elmer, trying to get possession of her hand, but she put it behind her, shaking her head smilingly.

"I am a much better man for knowing you, Myrtle. I am not what I used to be, and I owe it all to you."

"Nonsense, Elmer," said Myrtle, "I should be sorry to think that any change for the better in you was owing to any other cause than your own inate manliness of character. Come, Elmer," she continued, holding up her hand as he was about to interrupt her, and smiling with that blending of mischief and scorn which he had come to dread, "let us be sensible and talk like sensible people. You are constantly insisting upon your goodness. Are you then so very much better than other men, or are you merely priding yourself as being what in pure shame you ought to be? You seem to believe that you deserve great credit for being what you ought to be—a Man. Now, that is absurd, Elmer. You would merit the utmost scorn and contempt if you were other than you claim to be; but being that you deserve no more credit than another."

Such downright bluntness was not usual with Myrtle, but the man wearied her with his constant self-laudation;

and she was moreover exceedingly angry with him for his insinuations respecting Sherman and Rosie, and not above taking revenge with her sharp tongue. Ah! she knew a man, her own strong and manly lover who, with the purity of an angel, was as modest as man may be.

Elmer looked hurt at this unmerited rebuke. He did indeed take great credit to himself for what he was pleased to call his reform, and he could not understand her manifest indifference to it. He strode through the room a time or two, Myrtle following his movements with mocking eyes.

"You are hard on me, Myrtle," he said, appealingly.

"No, I am not. I hope not at least. Who am I to be hard on anybody? What I said applies equally to me."

"Well, I shall endeavor to win your good opinion, Myrtle," said Elmer, taking up his hat, "good-bye."

His gentle tone quite shamed Myrtle. In her penitence of spirit she smiled more kindly upon him than her wont.

"Good night, Elmer," she said, kindly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH ROSIE PLEADS AND ELMER PROMISES.

He thought of that smile and of her words when in the street. He thought of little Rosie and vaguely wondered how that matter would end. His passion for her had cooled. A few short weeks of furtive pleasure and satiety set in, making the object of his desire hateful in his eyes. He broke off all intimacy with her, hoping thus to end the matter, believing that she would soon forget him and learn to smile on some other of her numerous admirers—but too late! The evil was already done. Some four weeks after his desertion, when he had fondly fancied the incident closed forever, there came a frantic letter, an eloquent, tearful, piteous little appeal which filled him with surprise and consternation. He answered the note in person, calling in the darkness of the night, when Rosie, throwing herself into his arms, implored him with fearful sighs and tears to do her justice, to marry her and save her from open shame and dishonor. She reminded him of his promise, and over and over again begged him to do justice to her. She was about to become a mother, and terrified at the coming disclosure, she clung to him in the greatest agony, pleading, imploring, beseeching, weeping.

He was very tender. He renewed his vows and went away, leaving her very happy in spite of her grief and shame. He did not again visit Rosie, although letter after letter came to him, tearful, piteous little scrawls, in which the poor girl pleaded earnestly with her faithless lover. He knew that she had quit Murly's, and knew that she never left her home now. She told him of her loneliness and shame, of her mother's cruelty and how hard it was to conceal her condition from her. Mrs. Rosewood had discharged her servant, saying, sarcastically, that if Rosie preferred staying at home to working in Murly's she should at least earn her living. If she did not like it she could go to her

Myrtle, her General, her Mam Sue, her Elmer. She had no inkling of Rosie's condition, believing that Elmer had merely grown weary of her baby face. She taunted her daughter upon losing him, and cursed her for an idiot in permitting him to escape, but she did not suspect Rosie of wrongdoing. When she did, Rosie did not know what would happen, but something terrible, surely.

All of which Rosie told Elmer in her pitiful little letters. He felt very sorry for her, and deeply regretted the wrong done her, and cursed himself with all the bitterness of a weak nature, but never thought of righting the wrong in the only way in which it could be righted. He answered her letter, offering to find a place of concealment for her until her trouble was over, offering to spend any amount of money to make it easy to bear. To marry her was out of his power. He did not say so in so many words, being far too weak and cowardly for that, but he spoke vaguely of obligations to his father, and the hopes his father entertained for him in another direction, and so on. To all of which Rosie paid no heed, but continued her pleadings from day to day with a perseverance and an eloquence that astonished him. She was not a very bright girl, nor strong-minded to any noticeable extent, but having gotten that one idea of marriage into her little head, she clung to it with a tenacity that nothing on earth could shake. She had always been a very timid girl, and she was more timid now and retiring than ever. She would not go away from Clarenceburg, save with him, but if he would marry her she would willingly accompany him anywhere.

He thought of all this that evening as he walked along and wondered, sore at heart, why he had not at once turned to Myrtle that pure, sweet woman whose eyes had charmed him from the first, whose voice and presence soothed the spirit of unrest within him as nothing else could do. He never felt those base desires with Myrtle which pretty, innocent little Rosie and other women had inspired in him. She had attracted him from the first, but he had permitted Rosie's soft entrancing beauty to lure him aside. Her rosy prettiness had awakened desire in him; her shy modesty and innocence had only served to kindle that desire; her

resistance but fanned it to a blaze of passion which her final surrender had burned to ashes cold and grey.

He had wished her no harm. From the very beginning he had planned nothing more than a few weeks of mutual pleasure which would end in their parting in mutual satisfaction. They would go their different ways. Rosie would marry some honest mechanic, and he would marry Myrtle —they would meet in future years to smile at their youthful folly. The thing was happening every day. Women were no better than men; they were made of the same clay, born with the same passions, the same desires, the same evil impulses. Most women had known men other than their husbands, and they were none the worse for their youthful indiscretions. Their husbands, happy in their ignorance, smiled fondly at the thought of their own youthful escapades and the world wagged on in the same old way. Thus this young man reasoned.

Poor little Rosie! Of course he could not marry her. His wife must be a pure woman, unapproachable to all save him, modest, gentle and dignified as became the wife of a future leading citizen. What though he in his time had steeped himself to the ears in vice? That was all past now, and he was none the worse. He was a man, and men were governed by different standards than woman. He was not good, his wife must be all the better; he was weak, she must be all the stronger. She must be chaste and constant, yielding to him only, and in him find all her joys, her pleasures, her raptures, her happiness—her world! Rosie was not pure, but defiled. What though her impurity was owing to him? She had yielded to man, and she was unworthy to become his wife. Nevertheless—poor little Rosie!

In this musing state he had thoughtlessly approached the little white cottage in which Rosie dwelt, and which for weeks past he had constantly avoided. He quickened his pace, casting a furtive glance in its direction—and started back, confronted by Rosie.

"It is me, Elmer—your wife," said Rosie, timidly approaching him. "I—I was waiting for you. I have been waiting for many days in the hope of seeing you. Please,

dear Elmer, stay one moment and let me tell you about—you—know what!"

Elmer frowned and cast a quick glance around. They were unobserved; the street was quite deserted, but from the distance came the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Come in here, Rosie," he said, and placing his arm around the trembling little figure, he led her across the lawn, drawing her close behind the verandah. "Now, what is it?" he demanded harshly.

"Oh, Elmer, please don't speak so!" implored Rosie, piteously, "not to me, Elmer!"

"Tell me what you want of me?" said Elmer, in gentler tones.

"You know, Elmer. Oh dear, dear Elmer, you know it well. We must marry, Elmer, a real, true marriage. We must! I shall die of shame if you don't marry me now! Think, Elmer, what it means to me! How can I face the good General, Aunt Sadie, Myrtle, my friends, if I am not married? Everyone will despise me—be ashamed of me. They'll say I'm bad. Oh, why did I believe you? Why, did I trust you? Oh, I knew it wasn't a real, true marriage, but I trusted you because I loved you. You promised me faithfully—you did, Elmer! Oh how faithfully! Oh, why did you follow me? Why didn't you leave me alone?"

"I wish to God I had," he replied weakly, "but I didn't mean to get you into trouble. I never once thought it would end like this, so help me God, Rosie!"

"But it has, dear Elmer. And you will marry me as you promised?"

"My father—" he began.

"Oh, do not mind him, Elmer," cried Rosie. "It is of me that you must think. Of me, your wife before God."

She clung to him frantically, weeping, imploring, reproaching, kissing his hand in an agony of shame, remorse and terror. He tried to soothe her grief with a show of tenderness, and succeeded marvelously. It was a clear night, and by the light of the gleaming stars, she could see the pale outline of his face and mark its softening expression.

"I will be such a good wife to you, Elmer," she whispered softly. "I will love you so dearly and be so true and

devoted and tender that you will love me all over again. I have had no chance of showing my love, have I? You cannot know what a good wife I will be, can you, dear Elmer? I'm sorry about the letters, but I had to write and tell you, you know, Elmer. And you promised to marry me really, a thousand, thousand times, and I wanted to tell you that we had no time to lose. Say you will marry me, Elmer, say it, or I shall die!"

Down on her knees at his feet she crouched, weeping and pleading, a piteous sight. Once on that very spot she had turned from him in all her pride of virtue and outraged modesty. Now she knelt to him, kissing his hands and moistening them with her tears. Now she knelt to him weeping, praying, a poor, weak, stricken little creature, crying out that no one loved her; that everyone was cruel to her and imploring the wretch who was the cruelest of all for mercy and justice.

"Poor little Rosie," said Elmer, bending over her with tears of genuine pity in his eyes. He had throughout this scene tried to evade her eyes, and he now got the first full look into her face. He was shocked by the alteration in her. If there had been the remotest possibility of his yielding to the poor girl's entreaties the sight of that thin, pale, hollow-eyed face destroyed it utterly.

"Oh, Elmer," cried Rosie, springing up radiant with joy and hope, "you will never regret your kindness to me. I will worship you all my life. My Elmer."

She kissed his hands again and, like a child restored to happiness, began to prattle of her trouble.

"Mama is very hard to me, Elmer. She hates me—she always did. Nobody ever loved me but my Elmer and the dear General. He came the other day to see me, the dear, good General, but Mama was very rude to him and he will never come again. Aunt Sadie came to, but I locked my door and pretended to be asleep. She would know if she saw me. Didn't I do right, dear Elmer, to quit Murly's and stay at home? I knew you would think so and I am glad, but oh, Elmer, I cannot hide it from Mama much longer. Oh dear Elmer, I am so, so grateful to you."

Grateful for what? For throwing a kind word of pity

to the little wretch after ruining her. For condescending to hold her in his arms after robbing her of all a woman holds sacred.

"Rosie," said Elmer, interrupting her raptures, "you must go in now like a good little girl. I will make all arrangements tomorrow for taking you away with me. I will send Jacques in the evening with a note when I have everything completed. Do you understand?"

"Yes, dear Elmer," said Rosie clinging to him imploringly. "But—but, oh Elmer, you will surely come?"

"Yes, Rosie," said Elmer, kissing her to reassure her. "Have you any money, Rosie?"

"No, Elmer."

"I will give you some now. Keep it about you. Now good night."

"Oh Elmer, I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Don't be angry, Elmer," said Rosie, frightened at his harsh tone. "I'll wait for you, really I will, Elmer."

She looked up at him, making a pitiful attempt to smile cheerfully, and he bent down and kissed her again.

He remained for a time motionless in the shadow of the verandah when she had gone. He had heard the sound of a footfall on the walk and he did not care to be seen there by any one. The footfall ceased and, stepping out of the sahdow, he advanced a pace or two—and was confronted by the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose who, avoiding the hard walk, was advancing softly across the grassy lawn, coming briskly around the little porch. Neither could avoid the other. They met face to face and, pausing, stood for a moment staring at each other. Elmer looked startled, His Reverence absolutely frightened by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the young man. Elmer was the first to recover.

"Oh, ho!" said he, smiling, "rather late for pastoral calls, Your Reverence."

"Ah, Brother Marblemore," said the minister, in a tone of voice that plainly betrayed his perturbation of mind. "I'm glad to see you; very glad to see you."

He advanced a step, holding out his hand with that

unctuous smile which naturally accompanies the pastoral handclasp. Elmer, nothing loath, shook hands with him, chuckling softly as at an exquisite joke.

"Called to consult with the little widow, no doubt," said he, drolly.

"Yes," replied His Reverence, "I wished to see Sister Rosewood on a matter of very great importance."

"It must be," said Elmer, ironically. "You work too hard, Your Reverence. Day and night—night and day. It is really too much."

"I must do my duty," said His Reverence, with rather a pale smile.

"To be sure! And when your duty calls you to the bedside of a widowed sister at midnight, Your Reverence is not one to shirk it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not so late," said His Reverence, hastily, "it is scarcely ten o'clock."

"What matters an hour or two? Your duty calls you and you are here," said Elmer, shaking all over with laughter.

"You are fond of chaffing, Brother," said Mr. Ringrose, nervously, "but I do not mind."

"Come, Mr. Ringrose, don't play the hypocrite with me," said Elmer, more seriously. "I am not a tattler. At the same time—"

"Mr. Marblemore," spoke the minister, straightening his lithe form suddenly; "enough of this. I have been playing a part with you because I wished to see how far your assurance would carry you. Now, let me ask: what are you doing here at this hour, pray?"

Elmer started. "Oh, that's your game is it?" he cried with an oath; "you had better sing lower or I'll make this town too hot to hold you."

"Mr. Marblemore, I ask again: what are you doing here at this hour?" said His Reverence, raising his voice a bit. "Nothing good, I fear. Do you think I do not know the relations existing between you and little Rosie? Do you think that I have not marked her retirement, her pale cheeks and the general alteration in her?"

The minister was smiling broadly. Elmer stood dum-

founded. He had meant but to banter the other and enjoy a good laugh at his expense; but his quick-witted opponent, recalling Elmer's distracted looks in the first moment of their encounter, and connecting them and the young man's late presence near that house with Rosie's unaccountable seclusion, had jumped at once to the right conclusion, and by acting upon it promptly had turned the tables upon his sarcastic adversary.

"Yes, I have marked all this," continued His Reverence, sadly, "it has filled me with uneasiness and pain—so deep was my grief that I could not sleep tonight, and rising from my couch I came here, hoping against hope, to find you together so that I might warn you against the evil consequences of the course you are pursuing. You have done a great wrong to that young girl, a wrong which can never be undone. What would Brother Marblemore, your Christian father, say if he knew? You were tempted, no doubt, and the temptation was strong while Human Nature is weak and erring. It is sad, indeed, to reflect upon, but young men will be young men and Human Nature will always be the same. It governs us *all;* we are *all* alike subject to its weaknesses."

His Reverence paused, shaking his head dolefully. Elmer's glance had flashed from bantering gayety to hot anger, which gave way to uneasiness at mention of his father, but flashed into strong admiration before His Reverence had finished speaking.

"You win," he said, holding out his hand.

His Reverence clasped and shook it warmly.

"Ah, my young friend," he said, sadly, "if you would but let me—"

"Come, that'll do," said Elmer, with returning irritation, "don't rub it in for the devil's sake! So long!"

He turned away, and His Reverence looking after him shook his head sadly.

"Sad, very sad!" murmured His Reverence, mounting the steps of the little porch. "Oh, Human Nature, you have much to answer for. Alas! how sinful men are!"

He produced a key from his pocket and noiselessly unlocked the door, and, still shaking his head dolefully, went softly into the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH ROSIE WAITS IN VAIN.

Elmer chuckled a good deal on the way home. He was filled with profound admiration at the cunning displayed by His Reverence in their late encounter, and feeling himself secure from that gentleman's interference, he could not but laugh with all a young rake's glee in the depraved inclination of a man in His Reverence's position. He felt in no degree shocked by it. It bore out his previous belief in the depravity of all mankind.

"We're all alike, preacher and laymen, mother and daughter," he muttered, chuckling. "It's Human Nature, as His Reverence says."

His glee, however, was soon succeeded by gloom, as he recalled little Rosie's condition and his own predicament in consequence.

"It's too infernal bad," he muttered, trying to think of some way out of it. He could think of nothing but flight. He must go away at once. He would thus, by cutting off all hope from Rosie, compel her in pure desperation to go into concealment until her trouble was over.

It was Myrtle he feared; Myrtle alone. What would she think of him when Rosie's ruin became known and he was pointed out as her seducer? He doubted not that he could win her forgiveness in time, but he was hurt in anticipation by the sorrow his guilt would occasion to this pure saint, who had become so dear to him.

A white and troubled face looked out of his mirror that night. He fell into a restless sleep, thinking of his trouble, and it was the first thing that occurred to his mind on awakening in the morning. What would Myrtle think? What would she say? What do? He must see her once again and in some way prepare her mind for the shock, so that when it came she would think less hardly of him, recalling his repentant looks and humble demeanor. Yes, he would

see her once more, and then go away until it had blown over. Perhaps Rosie could be induced to go away. Perhaps if he sent for her—perhaps. He lay for some time planning and scheming impossible things without reaching any definite conclusion, except that he must flee.

He heard someone moving about his chamber, but thinking it was Jacques, his colored body servant, he did not move, but a soft chuckle coming to him made him rise quickly and look out. It was Mr. Marblemore. Elmer's rooms, but especially his bed chamber, were fitted up with all the dainty elegance of a woman's bower. The windows overlooking the vast lawn, were curtained in the sofest of white lace, rich crimson hangings divided the apartments; the carpets and rugs were of the costliest and the furniture of pure white enamel. The dressing tables, chairs and stands were of exquisite design and workmanship. They were littered with a thousand pretty knick-knacks in the way of toilet articles, pictures, jewelry, bottles of perfume, pipes and cigarettes.

Mr. Marblemore was moving about in the midst of this confusion, softly taking up the various pretty knick-knacks in his thick, clumsy fingers. His curling lip betrayed the scorn he felt for all these soft luxuries. He himself was a plain man, a lover of plain fare and plain surroundings. He had built this gorgeous mansion as a monument to his greatness, but he had ever felt out of place in it. He had no personal attendant, although the house was full of servants. One plainly furnished chamber to sleep in, with a room in which to pursue his mechanical experiments was all he asked or held in the great house of which he was the master.

"Eh, Daddy," said Elmer, yawning, "trespassing again, old boy?"

"You're a woman, Elmer," said the banker, smiling, "a good-for-nothing young woman."

"We can't all be like you, Daddy. One in a family is enough."

"I do not blame you for this kind of thing," said Mr. Marblemore, seating himself beside a window, and filling his vast lungs with the pure air. "No, I was merely remarking

upon it. But come, my boy, you are going down with me this morning?"

"Yes. I say, Daddy."

"Well," said Daddy, as Elmer paused.

"I would like to undertake that business which you were thinking of entrusting to Davidson."

"You? Why you don't know anything about it."

"You can explain. I'll carry it through. You often say I've a good head for business."

"So you have if you only weren't so restless. All you need is tying down. But this is away beyond your power, Elmer. It requires a man of experience, and one who will devote himself to it earnestly."

"I can do that, Daddy. You should trust me. I've got to understand all the ropes before I can be of real assistance to you. How can I learn them better than by coming into actual contact with men and things? I know all that can be learned about the banking business here."

Mr. Marblemore interrupted him with a shout of laughter.

"You learned it all in three months, didn't you?" he said. "Why, you rogue, I don't know it all yet, and I've been in business for twenty-five years. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"Well, Daddy," said Elmer, laughing, "I mean that I've got a general idea of it all and I want to learn something of the many threads leading from your office to the Lord only knows where—all over the world, Daddy, eh? Truly you are a wonderful man to grow so great and control so much from a little country town. It is stupendous. I had no idea how extensive your interests were until I looked into them. But come, Daddy, I'm really very much in earnest about taking hold of this thing. I did not know before that business was so fascinating. Will you entrust this commission to me?"

"No, Elmer. I did not grow so great, as you put it, by entrusting business of such importance to graceless young scamps like you. It would be poor business, my son. I can see Jocelyn now throwing up his hands on beholding you coming in with your impertinent know-it-all airs; but if you really want to go, Elmer, and mean to apply yourself seri-

ously, I will send you along with Davidson in young Harrington's place. That is, if you can be ready by noon, and are prepared to see it through to the end. It will mean six or eight months on the road."

"That will suit me, Daddy. I'm getting rusty hanging around here, and I want to get out and limber up a bit."

"But you must be modest and quiet and keep well in the background," said Mr. Marblemore, very seriously. "I can't have my plans ruined by any rash actions or foolish delays. You must stick close to Davidson and avoid dissipation. Davidson will be in constant touch with me, and on the first outbreak on your part I will order you home."

"All right, Daddy. You're the finest old martinet going."

"I'm glad, my son, that you have become so steady of late," said the banker in his kind voice.

"I wish, Daddy, that I had listened to you sooner," said Elmer in a voice so earnest that his father was touched. "As it is, I've done things that make me ashamed of looking into your kind face, and I'm not easily shamed. I'll tell you frankly, Daddy, that my principal reason for wanting to get away now is to avoid the consequences of my misdeeds."

"What! Running away, Elmer?" said the banker, shaking his head. "That won't do. Never run; stay and face the consequences, my son. It will be more manly."

"No, Daddy, I can't."

"What is the dark crime, Elmer?"

"You will know it, Daddy, soon enough, and all I ask you to remember is that it was done in the wild days that are past."

"Whatever it is, Elmer, it is not as bad as your running from it."

"No?"

"No. Running is cowardly."

"I'm not very brave, Daddy. I haven't got your courage."

"Well, this thing can't be very bad," said the banker, smiling, "else you wouldn't tell me of it. At any rate, I am glad of your general improvement. And, Elmer, I'm glad

of another thing, and that is the friendship between you and my girl."

Elmer had risen during the foregoing conversation and had partly dressed himself. He now stood before a mirror with a couple of brushes poised in his hands, but turned half around on hearing the banker's last words, then slowly turned to the mirror again and fell to brushing his hair with great energy.

"Clara is a very beautiful girl, Elmer."

"Yes, she is, Daddy."

"She is much like her mother, who was a farm lass. I married her in the early days when I hadn't a dollar ahead and nothing but my two hands to provide for us both. A good, sweet woman she was, Elmer, and I believe that, allowing for some trivial girlish faults due to her different training and environment, Clara is much like her mother in nature and disposition."

He paused for a moment, looking at Elmer, who was still brushing his yellow hair with great industry. Then: "Why not marry her, Elmer? You are not even remotely related, and I believe that she would make you a good wife."

"Oh, Daddy, don't talk to me of marriage yet."

"I'm not hurrying you. Take your time. I'm merely suggesting a thing to you that would afford us great happiness. Think of it, Elmer, will you?"

"Yes, I'll think of it, Daddy."

There was no reason on earth why he should not have frankly declared himself, and then and there confessed his passion for Myrtle. No reason, save his innate cowardice.

They went down together and found the ladies waiting for them in the dining-room. Elmer kissed his mother and shook hands with Clara, who met him with a show of friendliness. She looked quiet and listless, but her cheeks were as full and red and her form as robust as of yore.

"Elmer is going away for some months, Mary," said Mr. Marblemore during the morning meal.

"Some months, Andrew?" said Mary, with a glance of surprise.

"Yes. He insists on going with Davidson on a matter

of business which will take some months. He must start at noon."

"I don't like these sudden journeys, Andrew," protested Mrs. Marblemore.

"Business is business, Mama," said Elmer gravely.

"There's importance for you," said Mr. Marblemore with a roar of laughter.

Elmer kissed his mother before starting. "I'm off, Mama; Jacques can follow with the baggage. Good-bye, Clara."

She offered him her hand.

"Won't you give me a kiss, Clara?" he said, bending down with his sweet smile.

"Don't talk nonsense, sir," she said.

She did not turn away, nor smile, nor blush, but remained motionless, her eyes slowly enlarging as he, actuated doubtless by a wish to please his father, pressed his lips to hers. Clara did pale a little then and gave a little breathless gasp as if in astonishment at his presumption. Perhaps the soft contact called up other and painful memories in the breast of this strong open-minded young woman. She turned away without a word and walked from the room. Mr. Marblemore glanced in smiling significance at his wife, who returned his glance with a bright smile.

Elmer paid a hurried call to the old ivy-grown mansion which harbored the object of his desires, but learned to his dismay that Myrtle had gone to Forrestville that morning to lecture before a local woman's club. He went away at noon, as arranged with Mr. Davidson, Mr. Marblemore's most trusted agent.

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A little figure waited that night, standing on the outermost edge of the lawn, in front of the little white cottage. It waited there for hours, peering up and down the silent street, retreating hastily at sound of a foreign footstep, then returning quickly to her post of observation. But no one came. Rosie wrung her hands and sobbed aloud in anguish of spirit. Finally, at a very late hour, she went timidly into the street and walked hurriedly in the direction of the Marblemore mansion. She wore a little round felt hat and

a kind of half cloak which, reaching to her waist, concealed her matronliness of outline.

She walked on until she arrived opposite the great mansion. There she paused under the trees and waited. The mansion was wrapped in total darkness. She walked up and down, up and down for quite half an hour, weeping softly. When she had turned for the fiftieth time she heard the sound of a footstep close at hand. She crouched behind the slender trunk of a tree and peered out. The step came nearer. It was too dark to see who it was approaching until the figure arrived within a few feet of her place of concealment. Then she started forward with a little cry of recognition.

"Jacques," she said, "is that you, Jacques?"

The mulatto boy had carried letters between her and Elmer.

"Yes, Miss Rosewood," he replied, coming forward. "I've got a note for you. Electric light at the corner."

"Where is—Mr. Marblemore?"

"Gone."

"Gone!" gasped Rosie. "Gone where? When?"

"Chicago, this morning."

"Oh God!"

She hastened to the corner, where a great white light hissed and spluttered, and tore open the note with trembling fingers.

"Dear Rosie: I am sent away very suddenly. I will not be able to return for a long time. It is not my doing, Rosie. I am obliged to go. Don't take it so much to heart. Go to your Aunt Martha until your trouble is over. I will see you there on my return. Please do this, dear Rosie, for my sake as well as your own. Good-bye. I will return as soon as I can. We shall be very happy together yet, you and I. Lovingly, ELMER."

Rosie stared at the bit of paper for a long time in tearless wide-eyed grief. She understood it all clearly. Elmer had fled, leaving her to bear the shame and guilt alone.

"Is it all right, Miss Rosewood?" asked Jacques.

"Yes," she said blankly. "Yes, it's all right."

"I am to go to him. Shall I tell him anything?"

"No—yes—no—tell him nothing—anything."

She turned away, not towards home, but townward, walking with uncertain steps, but still pushing onward, as if with a settled purpose in view. The electric lights were still blazing on the square. It was then not yet midnight, but Rosie had barely reached the corner when they went down and, glowing redly for a moment, died out. At the same moment the town clock boomed out the hour of midnight. Rosie shivered, but pushed bravely on across the corner of the square, making for a patch of light which streamed from the windows of the principal drug store of the town. A clerk came forward to wait upon her.

She knew him; ah! she knew him well—Mr. Thomas, her one-time ardent admirer, the youth whose meek persistence had so grievously annoyed her in the innocent past.

"Why, Miss Rosie!" he said very softly, "have you been so very ill?" Her thin pale face and drawn cheeks quite shocked him.

"I want to get some medicine," said Rosie, timidly.

"Certainly. Have you a prescription?"

"No; I want some laudanum. Mama says that laudanum is good to help a person to sleep."

"It is very dangerous."

"I will be very careful, Mr. Thomas," said Rosie, smiling faintly.

He went to the rear and returned presently with a small phial, containing a dark brown fluid.

"You must follow the directions carefully, Miss Rosie," he said. "Are you not afraid of being out alone at this late hour?"

"No, sir."

"I hope you will soon get well."

"Thank you," said Rosie, the tears springing into her eyes at the young man's gentle tones.

Clutching the little bottle tightly in her hand, she walked into the street and hastened homeward. Would he have spoken to her so kindly if he knew? No. He would scorn her, despise her. Ah! he would soon know. All the world would know her shame on the morrow. She

entered the house very softly and slipped into her chamber without disturbing her mother's slumbers. A small lamp placed upon a little round table burned dimly. She took off her hat and cloak and sat down on the little bed, very tired, hot and panting from her quick walk and long night vigil. She undressed slowly and put on her snowy nightgown, and, standing before the mirror, unloosened her jet-black hair, which fell in a shower of curls upon her shoulders. Her face looked very pale enframed in that glossy black crown—very pale and thin. Once it was round and rosy and altogether lovely in its soft dimpled prettiness.

She sat wearily down, and with her little hands folded before her, she remained for a long time gazing at her reflection in the glass, and musing sadly upon the past. Her thoughts were vividly reflected upon her face. Sometimes she smiled a fleeting smile as of furtive joy, again her face was drawn in bitter grief and anguish. Great tears welled up into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, which from time to time flamed scarlet beneath a scorching blush. Of what was Rosie thinking in that bitter, bitter hour? No doubt she was looking back to a time when, pure and chaste as a little flower, she had borne herself in the midst of her friends with becoming pride and modesty. No doubt she was reflecting with bitter grief upon her present outcast lot and with anguish contrasting it with the joy and happiness that had been hers before. Ah! it was over now; her dream of love, and life must follow after; there was no other way!

One last glance she cast into the mirror, and then lay down upon the bed. She looked at the phial. She opened it, smelt it, tasted its contents. It was not unpleasant to the taste. Rosie hesitated, glancing around the familiar little room. After all, life was sweet. Though *he* was cruel and Mama hard, there were those who loved her. There was Aunt Sadie; there was the good General, and Myrtle and Mam Sue. But, oh! would they love her when they knew? No! They would turn from her in horror and loathing. At this awful thought Rosie raised the phial to her lips, determined once for all to end it; but her resolution weakened ere it touched them. Other thoughts came rush-

ing upon her, filling her soul with trembling terror. A thousand horrifying fancies beset her mind. The fears of childhood revived in force, an unreasoning terror of the night, and all its horrors magnified now by an imagination keyed to an unnatural pitch, took possession of her. If they found her in the morning lying still in death, she would be carried out and buried in the ground and left there for good and all. Day and night she would lie there in the cold, cold ground, through winter and summer. She would never see the sun and the sky again, she would never see the dear General again, nor Aunt Sadie, nor Myrtle, nor Mam Sue, nor—nor *him*.

She sighed piteously, and for a long time lay looking at the queer liquid that contained death, slow and painless, but all-destroying. If she lived, her shame would become known. People would talk of her. They would say, "Rosie is bad." Her old companions at the store would turn away their eyes when they met, and secretly gibe at her, saying that she was shameless, brazen—a strumpet, an outcast. Aunt Sadie would weep and Myrtle would turn from her as unclean. Even the General, the dear, good General, would cease to love her. Once more, as these dreadful thoughts came rushing into her little brain, she raised the phial to her lips; but why did the hand falter again and again, fall trembling upon the bed? Ah! who has implanted in our hearts that love of life, that fear of death, that dread of the unknown beyond?

"Oh my God! I can't, I can't," Rosie cried out, and, burying her face in the pillow, she burst into a passion of tears. The tears at least relieved her. She lay for a long time sobbing, but the sobs became less convulsive after a while, and gradually as she lay there weeping she fell asleep. The phial slipped from her hand and, rolling from the coverlet, fell unheeded upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXX.

A GLIMPSE OF DILLINGHAM THE POLITICIAN AND THE FAMILY MAN.

The breach between the two big political leaders widening constantly through the summer, assumed an aspect so threatening as the time for holding the Republican National Convention approached, as to cause the gravest forebodings on the part of the national leaders, and also to attract the delighted attention of the press of the entire country. For a rupture so serious in a State so important at a time so momentous, could not but become a matter of national importance and concern. The loss of Illinois to the party nationally meant its almost certain defeat. The great prairie State was the storm-center of the two conflicting parties, as was proven at the last election. Until that time Illinois had been reckoned as safely Republican, its usual majority being over a hundred thousand votes. But Southgate's determined fight against the organization at that time had not only surrendered the State into the hands of the Democrats locally, but had also thrown its entire electoral vote to that party nationally, which vote gave to it a decisive plurality over the Republican party. Judge, then, of the anxiety, the absolute despair of the National party leaders to be obliged to stand impotently by and witness a reenaction of a crime so heinous.

For they could do nothing. Watterson would brook no interference, and so he informed them in unmistakable terms. He maintained his usual stern silence, and Dillingham continued jauntily on his way, the same laughing, boisterous, devil-may-care, happy-go-lucky Dick as of yore. His growing greatness did not change him in the least. He was confident of triumphing over his powerful adversary. He turned a deaf ear to outside pleadings for harmony. The outcome was too uncertain to allow of sidetaking. However large Watterson loomed in the distance, on the ground

Dillingham's chances for ultimate supremacy looked equally promising. But to treat openly with Dillingham in the face of Watterson's undoubted leadership of the regular organization was out of the question, and to secretly conspire with him against the great chief would have been an exceedingly dangerous undertaking.

Dillingham's growth was astonishing. Nothing like it had ever been seen in politics before. The organization had been almost intact. Southgate alone held out with two or three districts, which would, of necessity, have been forced into line, for he was not powerful enough to stand alone, and no one would have tolerated a repetition of his late disastrous fiasco. But, lo! while the leaders were congratulating themselves on the promising outlook, Dillingham came out with his startling denunciation of Watterson. The consternation was very great, but at the first sign of hostility the northern leaders, with but one or two exceptions, gathered around Watterson, declaring their fidelity to him and to the organization. Dillingham stood practically alone, but he became exceedingly active. He went the rounds among the State leaders, and in his jolly, oily, inimitably boisterous manner he cajoled them into good humor once more. It was most remarkable that every man whom he visited came to be his sworn ally. One after another they fell away from Watterson, until all of the leaders of the populous northern districts had allied themselves with Dillingham. Like him, they came out openly in favor of a new organization, an organization formed on other lines and with a different policy. Like him they were outspoken against Watterson. The press, which at first had ridiculed Dillingham's pretensions, came to take him very seriously. Ere three months had passed, boisterous Dick had won over eight powerful organization leaders, and with Southgate's forces allied to his own he began to loom large on the political horizon. He was a power to be reckoned with, a power so great that the astute Sagamore preferred to maintain a discreet silence and to hold himself in an aloof and neutral position between the two contending factions.

Mr. Watterson's unbounded confidence in Dillingham's fidelity naturally inspired Sherman with a desire to see and

talk with boisterous Dick. If Dick was really faithful to Watterson, what then was the meaning of this game he was playing? The young man, burning with eagerness to clear up the mystery, if mystery there was, made it his first care on reaching Chicago to look up his old friend. The politician lived on the North Side, near Lincoln Park, occupying a handsome brown-stone house, in one of those quiet streets which lie by the dozen hidden between two bustling thoroughfares. It was late in the evening when Sherman rang the bell with little expectation of finding Dick at home, but hopeful of learning something of his whereabouts. The servant who answered his ring informed him to his great surprise and delight that her master was at home, having returned but an hour before from an extensive tour of the State. He gave his name to the girl and was ushered into a small parlor, where the maid left him. A moment after her departure he heard Dillingham's boisterous voice in an inner room.

"What! Watterson here?" he cried in accents of consternation. And the next moment the portly figure of the Chicago boss hove in sight. He was in his shirt-sleeves and looked flushed, with hair all rumpled and tie awry.

"Why, it's the nephew!" he cried on catching sight of Sherman. He grasped the young man's hands and began pumping his arms up and down with much energy, emitting little exclamations of surprise, delight and joy. He positively danced up and down in his glee. "The nephew," he roared. "Ha! ha! ha! Hello, Nephew. How's the Uncle, eh? Ho! ho! ho! How's my implacable enemy? And dear Aunt Sadie? How is she? Well? Good! Good! Good! I'm glad to hear it. Mighty glad to hear it. Damned glad to hear it. And the little preacher, how is she?"

All this time he was pumping away at Sherman's arms, and dancing in the greatest excitement and glee.

"Come in and see the wife and babies, Nephew," he cried, taking the young man by the arm and absolutely dragging him into an inner room. "The sweetest wife in Chicago; the finest babies in Illinois, or I'm a lobster! Here, Daisy, is Scott's nephew—Sherman Watterson, you know.

Shake hands with the wife, Nephew. Kiss her. Damn it! you're my friend!"

As the wife was a pleasant-faced little woman, quite a score of years younger than her grizzled husband, Sherman would willingly have complied with this last injunction, but he forebore on observing the indignant glance which Mrs. Dillingham cast at her all too generous spouse. He shook hands, however, cordially.

"I'm so glad to see the nephew of Mr. Watterson," said Mrs. Dillingham, smiling.

"Look at the babies, Nephew," bellowed Dick. "Ain't they great?"

There were three in all—a boy of six or seven, a girl of five and a second girl scarce three years old. They hovered shyly behind their mother, but when Dick sat down in a great rocker and held out his arms to them they came to him on the run and clambered all over him. The boy planted himself between the father's fat legs, while the girls, after much uncertain pawing, perched each upon a knee and, leaning back in Dick's arms, stared with all their might at the stranger.

"This little man is Winfield Scott Dillingham," said Dick, his great red face looking out from behind the three pretty childish faces like an amiable Goliath. "He's going to be President some day. Ask him if he ain't."

Winfield Scott nodded with great energy by way of confirmation.

"This," continued Dick, speaking in muffled tones from behind the barricade, "this young lady is Daisy Dillingham. She's going to marry a Governor—ask her."

Daisy smiled shyly and pressed her rosy cheek hard against her sire's cheek, hugging him with both arms clinging tightly around his neck.

"And this," said Dick, kissing the youngest warmly, "is Sadie Dillingham. She's never going to marry at all. She's going to be Papa's girl always. Ask her."

Sadie hid her face on her father's broad breast, but her curly head kept bobbing up and down in vehement confirmation.

"A fine family, Dick, upon my word," said Sherman heartily.

"When did you come to town, Nephew?"

"Two weeks ago. I'm taking a run around the world."

"Good! Trying your pin feathers, eh? Well, you've come to the right town. Chicago's the only place. Greatest city on earth! But it's high time I was gittin' down to the 'Place,' Daisy," continued Dick, gently depositing his children on the floor and rising to his feet. "Come on down with me, Nephew."

"Can't you let the 'Place' go over until tomorrow, Dick, now that Mr. Watterson is here—"

"Couldn't think of it, Daisy. Business before pleasure, you know—meetin' to attend, friends to see. Nephew'll be around some other time—say Sunday. Now, then," continued Dick, looking thoughtfully at the ceiling, "I want my coat, my vest and hat. I wonder who's going to get them for me?"

The little ones dashed away, shrieking with delight, and returned presently, each bearing one of the desired articles of dress. Dick placed himself on his knees, and Winfield Scott, after much strenuous tugging succeeded in placing the waistcoat in proper position on his sire's broad back. Daisy followed with the coat. This was a matter of greater moment, requiring the united efforts of Daisy and Winfield Scott ere it was properly adjusted. Little Sadie brought up the rear with her father's great silk hat, and Dick stood forth ready for the street.

"Now," said Dick, again surveying the ceiling, "I wan't my cane, two cigars and four matches."

With another shriek the children scattered and ere long returned, Winfield Scott carrying the cigars, Daisy the cane and little Sadie holding aloft the required number of matches. Then Dick, calling them good babies, kissed them all around, and followed up his wife, who had discreetly retreated behind a convenient curtain, from whence a prodigious smack announced the conjugal parting.

"You will surely come again, Mr. Watterson," said Mrs. Dillingham, reappearing with her husband, whose arm

she was trying to remove from about her waist. "Next Sunday?"

Sherman promised, and with his old friend sallied forth into the street.

"I congratulate you, Dick," said Sherman, patting him on the shoulder. "I had no idea you had such a pretty family."

"Don't look it, eh?" said Dick, chuckling. "Few people know about my family. Family's sacred, I think. Finest wife in the universe, Sherman, and ain't them babies great? Now I move that we walk to Clark Street, and townward till we run across a cab. A little exercise won't hurt us any. Yes, sir, fine family that," he continued as they swung into a long, sweeping stride. "I ain't much on the goody-good myself, but I'm a much better man because of my wife and babies. You wouldn't think, now, that I go to church every Sunday? Ha! ha! ha! Well, I do. I ain't much on praying, but I go through the motions and so set the babies a good example. They would think it odd, now, goin' to church with the wife, and me stayin' at home, wouldn't they? So I go. Yes, and when bedtime comes I go down on my knees with the babies. Ho! ho! ho! Great sight, eh? Wouldn't that tickle 'em down in the first ward if they knowed? I don't mean to say I pray. I forgot all the prayers long ago. Didn't ever know many I guess. But I go down on my knees all the same. And do you know why?" he continued, placing his hand on Sherman's arm. "One night little Winfield Scott came to me and says, 'Papa Dick, why don't you kneel down with us like Mama?' Just think! The little fellow had noticed me fightin' shy of prayers, and somethin' told him that if Mama prayed I ought to, too. What could I do? I was caught dead to rights, and the wife wasn't there at the moment to help me out of the hole, neither. So what does I do but go down on my knees and go through the motions. And ever since then when I'm at home I kneel down with the wife and babies."

"You did just the right thing, Dick," said Sherman with the air of a great-great-grandfather.

"Eh! I think so. I'm not tryin' to whine out of all

my cussedness, you understand. I don't expect to git many o' the good things goin' in the next world, but, by God! I'll try to give my babies a chance at 'em. I'm not the kind of man that thinks he kin make good fifty years of general cussedness by gittin' down on his marrow bones an' snivilin' a prayer or two. Not I. I'll take what's comin' to me here an' hereafter, an' I'll not squeal, neither. That's me! I've done some pretty shabby things in my little two-step, all right, all right, but I'm willin' to take the consequences, whether it's everlastin' burnin' or what it is, but my babies shall have a show for the other place."

"Why, you're not so bad, Dick."

"Oh! I wouldn't pick your pocket or rob a church, but —well, you understand. I'm a politician for what there is in it. Whatever you read in the papers concerning me, Nephew, is pretty near the bull's-eye. And they do rub it in, eh? especially about now."

"Dick, are you against my uncle, or are you playing a game?"

"Playin' a game!" said Dick in surprise. "What makes you think I'm playin' a game? No, I'm not playin' no game. Politics is politics, and I'm not in politics for my health."

"Dick, I cannot believe that you would side with a man like Southgate against your old friend."

Dick interrupted him with a yell of laughter; then, hailing a passing hansom, they got in and went speeding townward.

"I'm goin' to show you my poodle, Nephew," said Dick, humorously. "Didn't know I had a poodle, eh? Great dog that! Ho! ha! ha! Oh Lord! Oh Lord!"

Dick's "Place" was a gorgeous saloon, situated in the very heart of the first ward—a very palace, brilliantly illuminated, and glittering with mirrors and great glass windows. About two score men were gathered there, standing at the long bar or sitting around tables drinking. Sherman coming in with Dick was for a moment quite dazzled by the brilliance of it all and confused by the clamor of laughing, cursing, shouting voices. Their entrance attracted general attention. Dick was hailed on all sides, and the invitations to drink showered upon him by his boisterous patrons were

sufficient evidence of his popularity, had Sherman needed any such evidence to make the young man tremble for his uncle. For these men were all politicians, some of them quite important figures in the State organization. Many of them he had seen at Clarenceburg. There were Brockington and Summerville and Applegate and Spitzbub, besides many men of minor importance. Their presence here boded his uncle no good, if Dick was really in earnest, which he knew no reason to doubt.

Dick, paying little heed to his vociferous admirers, led the way into a little room behind the bar.

"I'm out, Dick," he said, in passing to the chief bartender.

"I see, Dick," replied the other.

"A nice place, eh?" said Dick complacently, as he seated himself opposite his guest, with a small round table between them.

"Yes, indeed."

"Pays well," said Dick, musingly. "Boys all patronize me. A bottle of wine, Dick—my kind—and some cigars."

"Southgate wants to see you, Dick," said the bartender.

"Hold him awhile. Yes," continued Dick, filling Sherman's glass and his own, "I do a good business, but I'm goin' to give it up. The wife says it's degradin'."

He looked at Sherman inquiringly.

"It all depends upon the point of view, Dick."

"Would you do it—sell liquor, I mean?"

"No, Dick, not if I had strength enough to handle a pick and shovel."

"Wouldn't care to see your son in the business, eh, if you had one?"

"No."

"So you see the wife's right." He sat drumming on the table a while in silence. "Don't drink much myself. I haven't been drunk twice since I was married. Still, the wife ain't contented, an' I'm goin' to give it up. Good business, though," he added regretfully.

"You are not a poor man, Dick, are you?"

"Oh, so, so! Got somethin' put away for the babies. Life's insured heavily for the wife in case I go off. I

would be worth a good deal more if I knew how to hold on to it, but, fact is, I'm a mark for every poor devil in town. It's 'Dick, I'm out of work; gimme a dollar,' or it's 'Dick, there's a family over there ain't got no coal,' or it's 'Dick, that family's starvin.' They all come to me. Other expenses, too. Last Christmas I gave away eight thousand turkeys, and I don't know how many pairs of shoes to kids, so's they could go to school. Then there's the trip across the Lake every first of August for the women and children. Costs like hell. Took six thousand last trip, and gave 'em a good time. Counts up."

"What will you go into, Dick, if you quit this?"

"Dunno yet. I'm looking around. Hope to find something that'll grow, so's I kin turn it over to Winfield Scott some day. What do you think of real estate? There ought to be good money. But time enough. Now I'll show you my poodle."

He hurried away, laughing like mad, and returned in two minutes with Southgate. Sherman knew the man. He looked much the same as he remembered to have seen him at the last State Convention, but there was a subtle change in him that Sherman did not like. He was quite as florid, portly and important as of yore; he looked quite as prosperous; his moustache was waxed as stiffly as ever, but there was a wavering uncertainty about his mouth and a look of suspicion and fear in his eyes as they followed Dillingham's movements, that reminded Sherman strangely of the animal with which Dick had classed him. For Southgate was the poodle that Dillingham had referred to—Southgate, and no other. He glanced distrustfully at Sherman, then at the bottle and cigars, as if he suspected him of having poisoned them.

"Here's Southgate," cried Dillingham, clapping the man on the shoulder with force enough almost to fell him to the floor. "Southgate, the great! Southgate, the only! Southgate, the master politician of his time! Southgate, who defied the great Watterson! Southgate, who defeated the organization. Ha, ha, ha!"

He was so boisterous as he spoke, looking down at Southgate with undisguised insolence and contempt, and

Southgate's smile was so feeble, his manner so uneasy and distrustful, and withal so shrinking and submissive, that Sherman at once understood the relations between them. It was indeed the master and the poodle.

"Have a drink, Southgate," cried Dillingham, boisterously. "Ha, ha, ha! Have a drink, mighty one. Ho! let us drink to the political remains of the great Watterson!"

"Yes, yes," cried Southgate, eagerly. "Down with Watterson. Ha, ha, ha!"

His manner, though eager, was full of suspicion and disquiet. The laugh was a hollow pretense—a shallow mockery of mirth.

"Ho, ho, ho!" shouted Dillingham. "Down with Watterson!"

"We'll do him up brown, won't we, Dillingham?" cried Southgate, with the eagerness of an old, old man.

"Don't call me Dillingham, Eddie," pleaded Dick, grinning; "it sounds so cold. Call me Dick. Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right, Dick," said Southgate. "I say, Dick, do you see what the papers are saying about him and about us?"

"Yes, yes, Eddie. We ain't very popular, eh? But, hang the papers, say I! What do we care for the papers?"

"But, Dick—"

"Don't call me Dick, Eddie," said Dillingham, imploringly. "Call me Dickey. It sounds so affectionate. Call me Dickey boy, Eddie. Ha, ha, ha!"

He lay back in his chair and roared with laughter, his great belly shaking like a jelly.

"You're feeling good tonight, Dick," said Southgate, biting his nails and staring across at his merry companion.

"Ain't I got cause to be? Ain't our grand scheme working? Ain't we got the whole State? Ain't Watterson down, and ain't we on top?"

"Yes, yes, yes," cried Southgate.

He looked so old and worn and haggard that Sherman felt sorry for him. Was this fearful, suspicious, shaking old man the same who had stood up against the great Watterson? The man who had caused the organization the first defeat in its history? It did not seem possible. Sherman was at a loss to understand his present subserviency to Dil-

lingham. How had Dick gotten the upper hand of him, and for what purpose?

"I say, Dick," said Southgate, "don't forget your promise to me. I'm next in line for Nightingale's seat."

"Of course you are, Eddie," bellowed Dick. "Anything you want is yours. If you don't see it, just ask for it. To be sure, you'll go to the United States Senate, Eddie. Who in all this State deserves as well of the party as you? Who worked so hard for it as Eddie Southgate of Peoria? Who fought for it so grandly as you? Who carried it to victory so often as you?"

"No one, Dick," cried Southgate, eagerly. "I did. I did."

"You bet you did," said Dillingham, eyeing him with a peculiar malevolence. "But I ain't introduced my friend yet. Mr. John Smith, of Jacksonville."

"Ah, Mr. Smith," said Southgate, shaking the young man's hand with the unctuous smile of the practised politician. "Seems to me I've heard of you before."

"He's heard of John Smith before," yelled Dillingham, pounding upon the table in uproarious delight.

"I've seen Mr. Smith somewhere," murmured Southgate, looking hard at Sherman, "but I can't just place him."

Dillingham, however, fearful, perhaps, that Sherman would not care to masquerade under an assumed name, gave Southgate no time to question the young man, but called upon Dick, the bartender, to admit those who wished to see him, and several of the more important leaders came in. Southgate pressing against the wall, eyed them all distrustfully. And so did Sherman, though for a far different reason. He could hardly doubt, seeing them here, that they had turned against his uncle, and yet, like his uncle, he could not bring himself to believe Dillingham unfaithful. At any rate, there was no Dillingham-Southgate faction. It was all Dillingham. The Peoria man was utterly eliminated from the fight. Dick had somehow wormed himself into Southgate's confidence, and, taking advantage of him, had robbed him of every vestige of power, though he permitted him to hang at his heels, a

sorry figure, subjected to the coarse ridicule of his former adherents.

More wine was brought and more cigars. The men stood about talking in low tones, each waiting his turn with Dillingham. Sherman exchanged nods with several, but did not go forward to shake hands, nor did any one of them approach him. Southgate stared around at them all suspiciously. No one came near him, and those to whom he turned walked away from him with little ceremony. They looked at him and talked in whispers, laughing heartily. The man had committed the unpardonable mistake of entrusting his all to a confederate. The confederate had played him false. He deserved no sympathy. Seeing Sherman sitting all alone, Southgate came over to him.

"Mr. Smith, are you acquainted with Mr. Watterson?" he asked, casting around him a fearful glance of distrust.

"Yes."

"Do you know how he feels towards me?" said Southgate. Then, without waiting for an answer, he continued hurriedly. "I assure you I am not his enemy. I never really have been his enemy. I always admired him truly; I loved him once. But, sh! don't tell Dick. He ain't to be trusted. He came to me cursing Watterson, and asked me to join hands with him to down him. I agreed, because he promised me Nightingale's seat—he was to be leader of the new organization. But no sooner had we formed our pact than he goes to Summerville, Dickson, Devlin and all my other allies, and—and wins them away from me. He undermined me, sir. I have absolutely no power now. All my leaders, my late allies and friends look to Dillingham, and not to me. I distrust him. I distrust everybody. Watterson is the only man that is trustworthy in the State. He always was trustworthy. He always was a loyal friend. I was forced to do what I did by men around me. If Watterson will only be friends with me, I may be able to do something before the Convention."

He would play the traitor to Dillingham as he had to Watterson, thought Sherman.

"I do not see, Mr. Southgate, why you should tell me all this," he said coldly. "As Dillingham's friend—"

"Because I trust you," said Southgate quickly. "You remind me strongly of someone whom I did trust once. Smith—John Smith, of Jacksonville—"

"Hey, there, Southgate," cried Dillingham, coming over. "Don't talk my friend's arm off."

Southgate shrank away, but at a word from Dillingham he put his arm into that of his master, and they started out together.

"Wait for me, Nephew," said Dick, looking over his shoulder. "Got a meeting to attend upstairs."

"How long will you be?"

"Dunno. An hour—two hours, mebbe."

"Too long, Dick. I'll finish this cigar, then go home."

"Well, so long. Be sure and be around to the house on Sunday. The wife'll be lookin' for you. And, say," he added, approaching the young man, "when you write Scott, tell him about my poodle."

"Look here, Dick," said Sherman very earnestly. "Are you against Uncle Winfield?"

"What makes you think I'm not?" said Dick quite sharply.

"Uncle Winfield believes in you—"

"What!"

"I say that Uncle Winfield, in spite of appearances, believes that you are faithful to the organization. But I'll tell you frankly, Dick, that after what I have seen here tonight I have my doubts."

Dillingham laughed strangely, but he wrung the young man's hand warmly.

"Wait and see, Nephew," he said. "Don't you think I'd make a good State leader? Wouldn't I look swell in Nightingale's seat? Eh?"

The cries of "Dick, Dick," at this moment became quite clamorous, and again shaking hands with Sherman, Dick hurried away, leaving Sherman filled with doubt and anxiety. Things looked very black for his uncle, he reflected on his way home, and he was exceedingly sorry on writing to his uncle not to be able to confirm him in his good opinion of Dick.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH MRS. ROSEWOOD BECOMES JEALOUS.

What the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose had at one time feared had not as yet made itself sufficiently manifest to cause him serious uneasiness. His popularity, far from waning, was steadily on the increase. The Watterson pew did indeed remain empty, but other pews were crowded to the aisle by folk of shallower intellect, who had come to regard His Reverence as a kind of dandified Messiah, whose message to earth-born sinners was pleasant of contemplation and easy of digestion.

"The weakness of erring Human Nature is responsible for all evils, all the wrongs, all the sins of the world," His Reverence was wont to say. "It is wrong to accuse ourselves of sin. Man, subject to the evils, the snares, the temptations of the world, falls victim solely by reason of the weakness of Human Nature. If Human Nature were strong, and not prone to err, man would be perfect, but as he is swayed and controlled by Human Nature, it is manifest that man was not designed by his Creator to be perfect, else he would not have been imbued by his Maker with erring Human Nature, and thus made victim to the wiles, temptations and snares of the world. Let us, therefore, thank the good and far-seeing God who maketh the luscious grass to grow for the beasts of the field, and wisely inspires in them a love for the delicious herbage; who created the mighty ocean and maketh the finny fish, both large and small, to disport them in its surging waters; who, out of nothing, and with a word, created the circumambient air and brought forth birds of infinite variety to inhabit it; and who, lastly, created man, the grandest of all His works, making him perfect in His image, but imbuing him with Human Nature, which governs him on his way through the world."

Thus did this reverend shepherd instill into the minds

of his flock a complacent self-pride, an indulgent self-pity. They listened to his discourses with smiling faces, congratulating God upon their goodness, and gently censuring Him for making such perfect beings subject to the sway of weak and erring Human Nature. Naturally, a pastor who could inspire such pleasing sentiments was popular, and deservedly so. The brothers liked him, the sisters adored him, for he had a way with him, had His Reverence, that pleased the sisters. He had a roguish eye and a tongue of infinite sweetness. Audacious, too, with a dashing manner when he pleased, but always gentle and deferential. Looking deep into the eyes of a pretty sister is a pleasant pastime, and may lead to greater things, for where is the sister so pious, so devout, so cold and rigorous as to chide a presumption so flattering in a person so handsome, so exalted, so gentle and so eloquent?

His Reverence knew women thoroughly, having studied them in the best of schools—experience. He knew the potent power of flattery, and he employed that weapon with consummate skill. He had figured in scandals ere now, but he had come through them pure and chaste as the driven snow. He had been attended to his new parish with whisperings and rumors and counter-rumors, which inestimably endeared him to the sisters, especially the prettier and younger among them, who looked upon him as a martyr, a gentle, innocent, persecuted soul, entitled to their protection and pitying regard. Nor did such reputation harm him with the brethren, save those in years, who, like the elderly sisters, were disposed to severity; but these he won over by a devout and deferential demeanor and a circumspect regard for all their little prejudices.

Although he had by a series of astonishing missteps blundered into the good graces of the all powerful Brother Marblemore, His Reverence did not, therefore cease in his assiduous attentions to the brothers and sisters of lesser importance. He spent a certain number of hours each day in making calls; he was everywhere received with smiles and graces, for he was a pleasant companion, with a laugh of his own and a good word for everybody. He listened with sympathy to long-winded complaints, and tempered

his counsels to the desires of the afflicted. He was merry with the mirth-loving; devout with the prayerfully inclined; courteous to all; condoling with those in need of consolation; soothing to the sorrowful—a gentle, sweet, mild-eyed, saint-like man. He never shirked his pastoral duties. He visited the sick, as in duty bound; collected money for missionary purposes; arranged entertainments without number, but all of the kindergarten kind, as the stiff-necked generation was still in the ascendancy, and would not brook the innovations which he at first had contemplated. His discourses were quite as brilliant as in the beginning; their sameness and inanity as unmarked, and delivered with a pleasing eloquence and fire. In a word, His Reverence was a model shepherd, and his popularity, measured by his deserts, was no greater than it should be.

It was a cool and cloudy day in early May when His Reverence, walking with his accustomed slow and graceful pace, turned with reluctant step in upon the walk leading to the little white house in which Mrs. Rosewood dwelled. The little cottage no longer wore that aspect of prettiness which distinguished it on the occasion of our first visit. It looked sadly bedraggled and in need of a new coat of paint in all its outward parts. This was all the more apparent because the mansions around it were as bright and gorgeous as ever, vying with the hues of the rainbow in riotous coloring.

But His Reverence was not thinking of this. His step was slow and his expression one of exceeding ill humor as he approached the door. It was opened promptly to his knock, and the little widow's smile welcomed him. The little parlor, too, bore traces of much ill-usage. The once pretty pattern of carpet was faded into an indistinguishable maze of shabby tracings; the flimsy furniture looked prematurely aged and weak, and the wall-paper was torn in places.

"So you have come," said the mistress of all this in a sharp voice, as she seated herself opposite her reverend visitor. "Your visits are becoming few and far between of late."

"I've told you why I should not, could not, dare not

come oftener," he replied in a tone in which pleading blended with reproach. "Don't be unreasonable. Why did you send for me today?"

"Because I wanted you. I wanted to know what you were doing."

"Doing! I'm attending to my duties. They are not light."

"But pleasant," replied Mrs. Rosewood with bitter irony. "Yes, very pleasant. Which of your beloved sisters engrosses Your Reverence's time and attention now? Sister Templeton? She needs grace no doubt, and Your Reverence is the one to instill it, in her husband's absence. Or is she saved already, like poor me? Then the young lady visiting Sister Langhorn may require Your Reverence's service. Or the Fowler girl, or Sister Gaynor. Yes, I can well believe that your duties are not light, Your Reverence has so many to attend to. Only it seems to me that you might remember your first friend, and your only real friend among them all."

From bitter irony she descended to stinging reproaches, which melted into tears.

"Don't be jealous, Rose," said His Reverence, stroking his black moustache and smiling. "Believe me, satire doesn't become you."

"I'm not as pretty as I was, am I?" sobbed the little widow. "You never tell me so, as you used. You are tired of me. Having used me as your spy, you now cast me aside!"

"Come, Rose, don't cry; that is foolish; and it is wrong to say that I used you as a spy and that I now wish to cast you off."

"Did you not? Who told you everything about everybody when you first came, a stranger? Who went about to houses and meetings listening to opinions expressed of you, so that she might keep you informed as to how you were generally regarded? I did. And did you not profit by it? Did you not learn from the information I brought you, just how to approach people? You said so then. You avowed your debt to me in those days. You laughed, telling me how you wheedled Sister Hammersmith into

good humor and liking of you after what I had told you of what she said regarding the trouble you got into at Wilmington, your former parish. Ah! you no longer need me now!"

"You are mistaken, Rose," said His Reverence, approaching and bending over her. "I have need of you, and I have never deserted you. You must remember that a man in my position cannot be seen coming and going at all hours of the day into a house having such a pretty mistress, without awakening suspicion. Come, don't be jealous. I hate jealousy. It doesn't become you. You have rendered me invaluable service; indeed you have, Rose, and I am very thankful. If I seem to neglect you now and then, believe me, I cannot help it. I must make calls. I must keep in constant touch with my people. You know that. I have explained it to you time and again. Look into your mirror and you will see how little you have to fear from any one."

He spoke half disdainfully, but his words seemed to revive the spirits of the unfortunate woman. Had she looked into the mirror as he bade her do, she would have seen a face bearing few traces of its former beauty. She was no longer plump and rosy, but vulgarly fat, and the color in her cheeks was not of nature's painting. Unchastity, passion and jealousy had indelibly imprinted their mark upon the once comely countenance, which in place of peevish pettiness, now expressed all the innate coarseness of the woman's soul. She was still neat; at least to outward semblance, but in order to appear pleasing in his eyes, she had powdered and painted her face even too profusely.

"I can't help being jealous, Mortimer," she said, smiling. "You are so wicked, as I have reason to know. First it was Mrs. Marblemore—"

"No, no!" he cried, coloring with anger. "Don't be a fool!"

"I know what I am talking about, and I am not a fool," she cried, with anger as quick as his own. "It was she! Don't I know? Didn't you go away in the hope that she would follow and meet you as I have often done?"

"I say you are a fool," he cried, pale with fear or fury, or a blending of both.

"I saw her going, almost running to the depot," cried Mrs. Rosewood. "I saw her standing there as the train left, afraid, yet wanting to go."

"You saw this," he cried, staring in genuine astonishment.

"Yes, I saw it."

"When?"

"The time you told me you were going to Wilmington, and the papers said that you had gone to Traviston. Where you planned to meet her I do not know, but I am very sure that you expected her to come, and that she wanted to go and started to go, but backed out at the last minute."

"You don't know what you are talking about," he said, staring.

"Don't I?" she retorted. "Very well, but let me assure you, sir, that I shall know what to do if ever I verify anything between you."

"Rose, your jealousy has driven you mad," said His Reverence, again seating himself beside her and taking her hand in his. "Do be reasonable."

"I am reasonable," she replied, rebelliously.

"But when you give utterance to things so manifestly untrue, you are not. How can you think that I would dare approach Sister Marblemore, the wife of Brother Marblemore, harboring a purpose so audacious?"

"You would dare anything—with a woman. Do I not know you?"

"It is jealousy, all jealousy, believe me. It perverts your mind and makes you suspect me—suspect everyone with whom I interchange the commonest courtesies of life. Do try to overcome this jealousy, Rose. Surely the very number of women with whom you have from time to time suspected me should prove the impossibility of the thing. The only intercourse I have had with Sister Marblemore has been on church work, and you know that I very rarely call on her. You know that, Rose."

She said "Yes," but in doubtful tones.

He said much more to the purpose, spending half an hour pleading, arguing, explaining, flattering, until the woman's frowns were chased away by smiles. His Rever-

ence through it all seemed to labor under suppressed excitement, and scarce concealed agitation.

He glanced often at his watch, and rose from time to time from his chair to take a turn through the room as he talked.

"I must go now, Rose," he said, at last, "but I will come in and see you at a more seasonable hour. Do not forget me."

It was not likely. She followed his graceful form with her eyes, and in her aspect dwelt every evidence of passionate devotion. She was dominated by a feeling deeper than mere infatuation. It was the first passion of her life, and however foul it was all-absorbing.

His Reverence turned townward, as she saw, and, prompted by a sudden feeling of curiosity and suspicion, the woman rose and went out, and walking leisurely, reached the foot of the lawn in time to see him turn in toward the great Marblemore mansion. She returned to the house, all her jealousy reawakened, and drawing a chair to the window, she stationed herself there and prepared resolutely to wait and watch for his return.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH MR. RINGROSE MEETS WITH A SURPRISE.

The invasion of modern ideas, fads and fashions into Clarenceburg society was now a thing of such long standing that the mere recollection of its early crudeness awakened a feeling of horror in the breasts of those who now moved grandly in its more exclusive circles. Mrs. Hammersmith, who, in view of Mrs. Marblemore's obstinate perversity, was recognized as the High Priestess of this self-constituted aristocracy, often spoke with a shudder of the rude houses they then inhabited, of the old-fashioned simplicity pervading them, and of the inconvenience and lack of luxury characterizing the life of that early time. There were then no carriages; an old-fashioned surrey did service for all; no servants save one maid-of-all-work; no balls; no receptions, but dances and parties a plenty, at which everyone was welcome. They worshipped first in churches built of logs; these gave way in time to pretty frame buildings, of which there were still three or four scattered through the town. With increasing wealth and importance, these simple structures began to be replaced by edifices of brick and stone. The congregation of which Mrs. Hammersmith was a shining light, was among the last to awaken to the fact that its house of worship was old-fashioned and antiquated. The lateness of the discovery was not due to niggardliness nor to any lack of funds, but rather to the almost primitive simplicity of the then pastor, the Reverend Mr. Winslow. He was a devout rather than an ambitious man, an earnest, zealous Christian, in whose old-fashioned mind was fixed an absurd notion that pomp of circumstance and splendor of surroundings were secondary in importance to the devout worship of God. He was, however, rudely awakened by those of his flock who, calling his attention to the splendors around them, and their own poverty of appearance by contrast, made plain to him their laudable

intention of emulating the example of other congregations. The church was accordingly built with an eye singly to outdo all others in grandeur and extravagance.

The church completed, it followed that a new pastor was required. Mr. Winslow was not only too old, but too old-fashioned. Looking around for a suitable shepherd, the attention of the powers that were was attracted to the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose, who, then without a pastorate, was residing with a brother clergyman at Chicago, in the odor of sanctity, having just emerged triumphantly from the ordeal of a trial by Clergy on charges preferred by an aggrieved husband, whose accusations were utterly disproved and cast to the ground. He was reputably a very earnest and eloquent preacher, and though there were those who strongly dissented, owing to the scandal in which he had been involved, the majority of opinions which held him a martyr, prevailed, and the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose was called to the gorgeous pulpit of the new church. He had received other calls, being at the time very much in the public eye, and a martyr, but this call, having the largest salary attached, carried the day and the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose came, and saw, and conquered.

His popularity we know, and how hard he labored to maintain it; knowing by experience how fleeting it was at best, he had from the beginning worked to gain the favor of the more powerful, which would stand him in good stead, he hoped, in time of need. The pillars of the church, with a single exception, he won in a trice. Brother Marblemore alone maintained the stiff and cold demeanor with which he had received him. He had nothing against the man. In fact, his eloquent discourses, full of subtle flattery, pleased the self-satisfied banker mightily, but he had schooled himself to show a dignified front to the world, and he saw no reason to alter his demeanor toward a man whose salary he helped to pay, and who from the outset had borne himself toward the great Marblemore with even more of deferential humility than he was accustomed to receiving. This continued for some months, when, as we have seen, His Reverence absolutely blundered into the banker's good graces.

But long before that time, noting the great man's unapproachable pride and apparent dislike to him, His Reverence despairing of winning his favor, cast about in his mind for a means by the use of which he could dispense with it and still control the man; in the banker's beautiful wife, he thought he saw the charming means to that end. He determined to rule him through his wife. He had done the like before. Knowing women, he doubted not his power of winning her, however cold in bearing, however proud and scornful in aspect. His mode of attack, his manner of approach, his measure of success, we have seen up to a certain point. Presuming upon what he thought he read in the woman's eyes, he had insinuated his proposal planning nothing so audacious as an absolute elopement. He meant but to spend a few days secretly with her in the great city and then return, persuading her to do likewise. No one would be the wiser. They could repeat their little journeys as opportunities arose, and in the meantime, through the partner of his pleasures, he would rule the man they wronged.

His scheme had failed somehow miserably; and now, moreover, he was firmly established in the good graces of the mighty banker. Nevertheless, he continued to think of the woman, urged on by a passion of which he had deemed himself incapable. Mary's beauty, her wealth and station, but above all, her incomprehensible nature, had won upon him unconsciously. He had meant to play the game with coolness, but had himself fallen a victim to the magnetism irradiating from this woman. He could not understand her. She did not encourage him in any positive way. She never spoke one word to him that might not have been uttered in the presence of her husband. Her manner when alone with him compelled at least a semblance of respectful deference, and yet there was that in her eyes which encouraged him. She knew of his passion for her, he was sure. She understood his purpose in coming to her at any rate, and yet she did not forbid his visits. And then those speaking eyes of hers that looked into his expressing strong emotion! They encouraged him to hope, and at last emboldened him to make his veiled proposal. He went away

hoping and believing that she would follow, and remained the allotted time without seeing her for whom he so ardently waited. He returned perplexed and astonished. He could not believe that she was indifferent to him, but what could he think in the face of this decided rebuff? He returned and went about his usual duties, avoiding her. His glance was furtive when next they met. In her eyes was the same troubled look that he remembered so well. He was dumbfounded. What was it? Had she misunderstood him? Had she not taken his meaning? He was sure she had. Then what was it? He could not understand the woman at all. Her demeanor contradicted her actions. She was incomprehensible. He avoided her, wondering, his passion, fed by constant thought of her, growing. He attended her party because he owed it to her husband, he thought, to show himself there at least for a few moments. He pressed her hand at church and looked into her eyes with questioning glance. Her look was always the same—a troubled expression in which appeal and deep emotion blended.

He had thought over the matter from every point of view, without reaching any conclusion, until suddenly Mrs. Rosewood's jealousy had let a wondrous light in upon what had so long been so deep a mystery to him. She had meant to meet him. She had awaited only for the opportunity, which did not come until late. But why had she then hesitated? No doubt Mrs. Rosewood, who in her jealousy had haunted the station during his absence, had herself deterred her. A very little thing will turn a woman at such a crisis—a word spoken—a glance into a familiar face—any of a thousand possible things; and then no doubt she had not fully understood him. She had perhaps thought his purpose an absolute elopement, and naturally she had hesitated. Yes, that was the solution. He was fiercely angry with Mrs. Rosewood for withholding this knowledge from him so long. He hated that little woman; he had never cared for her; he had seduced her for his purposes, but he was now disgusted with her. Her angry outbursts, her jealousy, her tears and ugliness, awakened loathing in him and—fear.

He walked quickly away from the little house with his eyes fixed upon the ground in deep thought, and without pause, turned toward the great mansion. Was Mr. Marblemore at home? No. Mrs. Marblemore then? Yes.

He was shown into the little reception room just off the dining-room, where she presently met him, coming in quietly with a courteous smile of welcome. Her cheeks, however, were flushed and her glance questioning.

She gave him her hand, which he gently pressed and released.

"I understand," said His Reverence, smiling, "that Brother Marblemore is away."

"Yes," she replied, inclining her head.

"He is still in New York?"

"He returns tonight."

"Ah! He is a great man, a financial genius as he is truly called. It is astonishing to think that a provincial banker could carry through a deal of such magnitude as the merging of three great railroads, and do it with such consummate skill! Astonishing! It was a big deal. No wonder his presence was required on the ground. We miss him sadly in the church. And you also, Sister. You have taken no interest in church work of late!"

"No," she replied, looking away towards the window. "I did not know of anything to do. Such work must be indicated by the proper authority, and no suggestions have reached me."

"I understand your reproach, Sister," His Reverence replied, gently. "I should have called, I know, but—but how could I do so when I feared that I had offended you beyond forgiveness?"

She did not contradict him as he had expected her in pure courtesy to do. Had she done so he would infallibly have yielded to the passion that consumed him. She looked wondrously beautiful with her wealth of golden hair, her pure color, and fine matronly figure, which was clothed in a ravishing negligee gown of a sky blue tint, her favorite color. No, she did not gainsay him nor deny his offense, nor in any way reply to his self-accusation, though it was

put in the form of an eager query. Her eyes still looked toward the window.

"Is there anything in which I can assist you?" she asked, in a low voice.

"There are several matters which I wish to talk over with you at a more favorable opportunity," he said, taken aback by her strange manner.

"Very well," she replied.

"Are you not very lonely, Sister?" he asked sympathetically.

"Somewhat. Time passes slowly," she said.

She seemed a little more at ease, breathing freer, as if some fancied danger were past.

"It is very hard to bear—loneliness," said His Reverence, softly, "nor can we in justice blame one who, a prey to it, allows his mind to stray away to fields into which, if happily occupied, his inclination would never lead him. Some people are unnecessarily made subject to loneliness—women, say, whose husbands, forgetful of their happiness, leave them at home alone, with nothing to occupy their minds, and themselves plunge into business, politics or dissipation. They forget all about their wives and their possible loneliness. Would it be so very wrong for a woman so placed to follow the natural bent of her mind and seek pleasure, diversion, happiness, on her own account? She would simply be giving way to the weakness of Human Nature, for it is Human Nature to desire happiness, and only through following the promptings of Human Nature, can true happiness be attained. The laws made to govern society are all aimed at curbing Human Nature, but are those laws therefore just?"

He paused barely long enough to permit her to interject a word if she chose, but she said nothing; she had listened with almost breathless interest. Her eyes were fixed upon the window, and her small, plump white hands were folded before her.

"The opinion of the world, founded upon those laws, would, I know, censure a woman who, ignoring them for the dictation of Human Nature, followed her inclination and accepted the happiness which she otherwise could not enjoy;

but the world is a harsh judge. It makes no allowances for the weaknesses of erring Human Nature, but, judging all things from its own iron-clad standard, it censures that which is wholly natural. And for that reason, the man and woman seeking happiness, bid defiance to the rigid laws imposed upon them, and follow their inclinations, wisely refraining, however, from giving the world reason to frown upon them, by keeping secret their mutual happiness. It is an interesting subject for speculation, such as I am given to indulging in and out of season. Have you ever given your mind to such interesting speculations, Sister Marblemore?"

"No, I cannot say that I have," she replied, catching her breath sharply.

His manner while speaking, harmonizing with his low, sweet voice, was abstracted and speculative, as if he were merely pursuing a train of thought suggested by her lonely condition.

"The study of Human Nature is a passion with me," continued His Reverence, smiling. "When I see a man priding himself upon his greatness in politics, in business, or in any line of human endeavor, I smile, because I know that that man like other men, is subject to the weaknesses and the errors arising out of poor Human Nature. If that man, however great, curbs his natural inclinations and lives strictly according to the iron code prescribed by the stern world, he is not truly happy despite his pre-eminence. And yet, we all allow ourselves to be ruled by the world's laws."

"Mr. Ringrose," said Mary, gravely, turning her eyes full upon him, "such reasoning is utterly false. It is neither becoming in you to utter such sophistries, nor in me to listen to them."

His Reverence, utterly astounded, became pale and red by turns.

"My dear Sister," he cried, "I was merely following out a line of argument from a certain standpoint. But you are right, and I really beg your pardon. When I get upon the subject of Human Nature," said His Reverence, smiling deprecatingly, and pushing the fascinating subject away with both white hands, "I am carried away. But I must go

now, Sister Marblemore. I will call again to talk over matters connected with our church work."

"I shall be pleased," she replied.

He went away puzzled, perplexed, confounded by this strange woman's inexplicable conduct. She had avoided his eyes persistently, but her manner had been much the same. He was not indifferent to her, his presence agitated her, yet she had repelled him—nay, absolutely rebuked him! What was he to make of a woman who lured him by her manner, yet repulsed him with words? Who dared not meet his eyes, yet repelled his insinuating advances as presumptuous? He went away quivering with passion, for she was very beautiful, and all the more attractive because apparently unattainable.

Could he have seen the look of horror with which she followed his retreating form! Could he have looked back and seen her with head bowed against the window; could he have heard the cry that came bursting from her lips: "Fool! Fool! God in heaven, what a fool I was!"—could he have heard and seen all this, say, would not his doubts have been resolved?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH ROSIE IS DRIVEN FORTH.

Mrs. Rosewood maintained her post beside the window with very great patience, but her vigilance was not rewarded for three long hours, when daylight merging into darkness, she was barely able to distinguish the form of His Reverence approaching. She was on the point of rushing out, when she saw him turn in upon the walk towards her house.

"I have returned, you see," he said smiling, when she opened the door to him. "I called on Sister Marblemore and had a long talk with her on church matters, and then I made various other calls."

It is not unlikely that he had suspected her of watching him, and he thus by a show of frankness cut all the ground from under her feet. The reproaches with which she had prepared to overwhelm him were silenced.

"I am not jealous, Mortimer," she said, smiling.

"You have no cause," he replied. "Is Rosie within?"

"Yes, she's sleeping, I suppose. I don't know what to make of her."

"I suppose not," he said, smiling sardonically.

"She never leaves the house now and rarely her bedchamber. She will see no one. She locks her door when Aunt Sadie comes. She's breaking her heart, the fool, over that Elmer. If she had used a little sense when she had him, she could have kept him for good. But she's as stupid as an owl, and it's no wonder that he tired of her. But don't let's talk of her."

"No," he replied, "a waste of time."

They had many other things to talk of, to be sure. It was much later—hours later, when he took his departure, and Mrs. Rosewood going into the little dining-room found it dark. Nor was there a fire in the kitchen stove. Rosie was nowhere about. Mrs. Rosewood went into the girl's chamber where she discovered her lying upon the bed. She caught the girl by the arm and shook her roughly.

"Get up, you lazy devil," she screamed, "always sleeping like a beast. Get up and build the fire in the kitchen and get supper ready. And be quick about it, too, or you'll be sorry."

She went into the dining-room to light the lamp, with this threat upon her lips, from whence she continued her scolding with unabated fury. Rosie rose, with a deep sigh, and, adjusting her dress, prepared to come out.

"Oh, I wish I could sleep," murmured the poor child, "for then only I forget my trouble."

Her mother's shrill voice coming in to her, she hastened her movements and presently emerged into the dining-room, and going to the kitchen, she began her work by taking some wood from the box behind the stove with which to kindle the fire.

"You're a nice girl," screamed her mother, who was bustling about the dining-room and scolding unceasingly. "You and your fine lover! Why didn't you marry him, you fool? Why didn't you keep him when you had him? He tired of your baby face, didn't he? And no wonder! for there surely never was such a stupid, lazy, good-for-nothing girl in the world. But you'll have to change your ways if you want to stay here. It's time you were married. I've taken care of you long enough. Why don't you marry? Do you think I'm going to keep you here all your life? Go out and make your own living. It'll come to that yet. I'm tired of your everlasting whining. I hate you. I always did hate you."

"I know that, Mama," said Rosie, catching her breath with a sob.

"Don't talk back to me!" screamed the virago. "I don't want a word out of you. And if you don't like it, you can go to your General, your Mam Sue, your Aunt Sadie. If they want you, they can have you. I don't. I hate you."

Rosie did not answer, but continued slowly with her work. Now Mrs. Rosewood, to more effectively emphasize her anger and detestation, had remained standing a few feet from the door, glaring in at her daughter. When she had finished, her eyes remained riveted on Rosie's form. She noticed its swelling outline, and the girl's pale, worn face

and slow, languid movements, and the truth burst in full upon her. It may seem strange that Rosie's condition should so long have escaped her mother, but as all the world knows, those nearest to such a secret, are the very last to suspect its presence. With all her hatred and jealousy of the girl, it had never entered Mrs. Rosewood's mind to suspect her chastity. She stood horrified, and for a full minute she watched the unconscious girl until Rosie, looking up, surprised at her mother's continued silence, beheld her standing there, and she knew then that her secret was discovered.

"Rosie!" said Mrs. Rosewood, in an awful voice.

"Mama!" gasped the girl, and fell swooning to the floor.

She had so long lived in anticipation of just this moment, and had so often pictured her mother's surprise and anger, that its coming frightened her out of her senses. Mrs. Rosewood rushed into the kitchen in a kind of frenzy, and fell to beating the unconscious girl as she lay, screaming in her fury.

"Is this what is ailing you? Oh, you little devil! Oh, you hypocrite! This is what is troubling you, eh? This is why your fine lover left you. He has ruined you, you hussy. I'll tear your eyes out for disgracing me. Oh, you devil!"

She went on, shrieking thus in her rage and raining blows down upon the unconscious girl's face and body. Then she began to weep aloud, throwing herself into a chair, crying out that she was disgraced. Rosie opened her eyes after a while and rose upon her knees.

"Mama! Mama!" was all that she could say.

"Get away, you devil," cried her mother. "Don't touch me. I hate you. Oh, I always knew you would come to this. But if you think you're going to disgrace me, you're mistaken. Come. You can go to your lover. Come."

She caught the terrified girl by the arm and dragged her to her feet, and half pushing, half dragging her to the side door, she thrust her out upon the little verandah and closed and locked the door upon her, screaming: "Go to your fine lover. Go!"

Rosie sank down, half relieved, half frightened at the darkness around her. The poor child had wept so much during the past few weeks that she had no tears left now to shed. She could only moan and sigh and wring her hands. She sat for a long time not daring to move. The night was very chilly. Rosie had neither hat nor cloak, but clad in a thin wrapper and an apron, she was soon chilled through and through. Animated by desperation, she arose and timidly tried the door. It was locked. She tapped gently, but received no answer.

"Mama! Mama!" she called, but silence only answered her. She repeated the call in louder tones with no better results; then, becoming frightened, she beat upon the door with her hands and rattled the handle, calling upon her mother with frantic violence. Not a sound came from within.

"Oh, God! it is not possible that she means to leave me out here all night!" said Rosie, sobbing.

She renewed her efforts on the door, crying out that she was cold; but in vain, and throwing herself upon the verandah, she moaned piteously.

"Oh, God! I wish I could die. I wish I could die."

Her hand went to her bosom where she usually carried a small phial of dark brown liquid, but it was not there. She had left it in her chamber. She remembered now. It was placed conspicuously upon the stand beside her little bed. Oh, why had she not kept it by her? She took off her apron and wrapped it about her head and shoulders and lay down. But not for long. Chilled to the bone, she started up and fell upon the door in a frenzy, beating it with her little hands until they were bruised and bleeding. But all in vain. She continued thus alternately casting herself down upon the floor and rising to throw herself upon the door for a long time—hours it seemed to the poor distracted girl.

At last, almost mad with fear and cold, she began to walk, first to and fro, to and fro, upon the narrow verandah, then upon the walk, and for a time she succeeded in keeping warm thus. But even that did not answer for long. She had another life to protect besides her own, and the preying

thought of spending the entire night thus in the open, with nowhere to hide when morning came, really drove her out of her senses, so that without knowing what she did, she rushed into the street and almost running, hastened in that direction which led away from town. But one thought filled her childish mind. Her mother hating her had driven her out of her home, she would go to those who, loving her, would take her in. The one who loved her most was the General, and with the General was Mam Sue who worshipped her. She hastened with all her might towards the General's house.

It was very late then. The electric lights which were promptly extinguished at midnight were out. The town was wrapped in total darkness. She met no one, not even the policeman who was supposed to patrol that part of the town. Her step grew slower after a time, for not only was she burdened with another little life, which made walking very hard, but returning warmth of body brought new thoughts, new fears, new terrors to her mind. What would the General say, seeing her? What would he say when he knew? Oh, if she could but die! Her step slackened, but did not wholly cease. Where could she turn, if not to the General? Aunt Sadie, she knew, would take her in, but oh, she could not face Aunt Sadie! She walked on slowly until, driven by the cold, she resumed her rapid pace again. It was very dark. She heard dogs barking around her, cocks crowing even as she neared the outskirts of the town. No doubt morning was near at hand. She groped her way to the gate and went into the yard, her step dragging as she went up the wide walk between the clumps of shrubbery. Should she knock at the door and rouse the good General? She went up the steps to the verandah. With her hand raised to knock, she paused, and for a long time she stood, hesitating between her terror of the night and the shame of facing the General. She heard a sound within as of someone moving about, and crouched down beside the door, trembling. It was only Carlo. She heard him sniffing suspiciously. She crouched low, shrinking into a corner. Her hands came in contact with a rug which Mam Sue had hung out to air. Quite forgetting her sorrow in the glee awak-

ened by this opportune discovery, she laughed softly and crouching down in a corner of the wide verandah, she drew the rug around her, telling herself that she would not disturb the good General but would wait for morning.

Curling up into the smallest possible compass, and sheltered in a measure from the frosty night air by the railing and the rug, she became quite warm and remained so. And gradually as she lay there, trembling like a poor frightened hare, her weariness of body began to assert itself and she fell into a fitful sleep.

* * * * * * * * * *

When Rosie awoke it was broad daylight. She opened her eyes and gazed around in deep astonishment. Carlo was dancing about, barking joyously and growling in deep delight, as he playfully shook the rug which he had dragged from off the sleeping girl. Above her bent the horror-stricken countenance of the General. For one moment Rosie lay gazing up at him with an expression of utter bewilderment, then all suddenly she started up into a crouching position, covering her face with her hands.

"Rosie! Dimples!" the General cried, in a shaking voice. "How long have you been here, child?"

"Don't look at me, General!" she gasped out, shivering and sobbing wildly. "Please, please, don't look at me. I am bad! Oh, if I could only die!"

"Don't cry so, Rosie," said the General, in a gentle voice. "How long have you been here, child?"

"Oh, ever so long—all night nearly. Mama drove me out in the night, and I came here. I—I didn't know where to go. It was cold, so cold! I thought I would die. Please don't send me away, General!"

She crouched at his feet a piteous figure. Carlo had become very quiet now. He licked the poor child's hands, glancing from her face to that of his master, with a look of supplication. Rosie threw her arms around the big dog's neck, and buried her face in his long hair.

"Come, Dimples," said the General. "This is no place fo' you. Come."

He took her hand in his and led the shamefaced girl into the house where Mam Sue met them, staring.

"Missy Rosie!" cried Mam Sue, in great astonishment.

Rosie ran to her and hid her face in Mam Sue's broad bosom. The General sat down in his arm chair, too grief-stricken to speak.

"Take her upstairs, Mam Sue," he said after a while. "Give her Master Sherman's room. She will stay with us."

"Stay wif' us, Mas' Dave!" cried Mam Sue.

"Yes; she will tell you why."

The General sat for a long time in deep abstraction, stroking handsome Carlo's head to the dog's great satisfaction. That Rosie, his little pet, "Dimples," as he had fondly called her, should be brought so low! It did not seem possible that the shamed, bedraggled woman above stairs could be the innocent little girl he had known and loved. How shy she had been, how modest, how sweetly innocent of all wrong. Good God! who could have wrought this ruin? What base villain had done this awful thing? He started up with a blood-curdling oath. It was young Marblemore. It could be no other.

"I'll make him marry her," he cried, striding through the room, hot with anger. "He shall do justice to Little Dimples or he'll ans'wa' to me with his life!"

Mam Sue came down from above stairs, rocking herself in the deepest grief.

"Oh, Marse Dave, oh, Marse Dave!" she cried, "dat po' chile am done spoiled, sah. Oh, Lawd God! wha' man so mean as to ha'm that po' innocent lamb?"

"How is she, Mam Sue?"

"In a fevah, sah," replied the old negress with streaming eyes. "She's out in de col' all night, Marse Dave, all de libin' night, sah. She's col' den hot, den col' again. We must get a doctah, sah."

"I'll see to it. I would like to speak to her. Can she see me now?"

"Yes, Marse Dave. Oh, Lawd God! Ah'll tell her, Marse Dave."

She hurried upstairs, the General following more slowly.

"Tell him, please not," he heard Rosie say.

But he went in nevertheless. Rosie was in bed, alter-

nately freezing and burning up in a fever, as Mam Sue had said.

She could not meet the General's eyes. Her shame filled him with compassion.

"Rosie," he said slowly and gravely; "who is responsible fo' this?"

Rosie opened her eyes and gazed beseechingly into the General's stern face, but did not reply.

"Is it Elmer—young Ma'blemo'?"

Her hands went up to her face once more. She nodded once.

"Then, by God! he shall answa' to me!"

"General!" cried Rosie, starting up in bed, terrified almost out of her senses by his savage tone and fierce expression of countenance.

"He must marry you, Rosie," the General said, sternly; "and at once."

"He promised me, General," Rosie cried out eagerly; "but he couldn't. His father wouldn't let him. He sent him away. He could not help it, General. His father is hard and cruel to him. He often said so. He would have kept his promise if he could."

"My po' child," said the old man compassionately.

Bidding Mam Sue keep everything quiet, the General went away.

The clouds had disappeared with the dawn and the sun was an hour high in the heavens. The air was still quite chilly, however, and the General shuddered with horror, and struck the ground with his stick in a fury, as he thought of that poor child burdened as she was and bowed with shame, spending the long hours of the night in that frosty atmosphere.

The Wattersons were still at breakfast. They were much astonished at seeing their old friend at that early hour. Aunt Sadie reading something in his grave, sorrowful look, cried: "What is it, General?"

She came up to him in her sweet, womanly way, thinking that something was amiss with himself.

"Wait, Mistress Sadie," said the General, taking her hand in his.

Aunt Sadie sat down, knowing that he must be tired, and that until she did so, the gallant old man would not avail himself of the chair she offered him.

"Something has happened, General?" said Aunt Sadie, breathlessly. Mr. Watterson and Myrtle were looking on in great suspense.

"Madam, Little Dimples is—not well."

"Not well!" cried Aunt Sadie.

"Oh, I knew it," cried Myrtle, starting up.

"Listen, Madam, this mo'ning I found her lying on my do'step. She spent the night in wande'ing the streets and is now in a high fever. Her mothah drove her from her house."

"Dear God!" cried Aunt Sadie, horrified.

"Surely, surely, General—" began Mr. Watterson.

"But why, General?" asked Myrtle, clasping her hands. "What has Rosie done?"

"She has been wronged by a scoundrel. She is about to become a mothah."

Aunt Sadie and Myrtle gazed at each other in speechless horror. The thing was impossible, unbelievable! Rosie, sweet, innocent little Rosie wronged, about to become a mother! But the General's sorrowful face was not to be doubted.

"Who has done this terrible thing?" asked Mr. Watterson.

"Who but that Ma'blemo' brat?" cried the General. "Oh, what a senseless idiot I was! To see him with her and not to strike him down! But who would have thought that he would have dared touch that innocent child? And yet I knew him—knew what he was, and I let him go on!"

Not the least part of his rage and shame lay in the knowledge that he had himself encouraged the young man in his villainy. He had smiled upon him, calling him a dashing blade, a roving young blood, admiring the youth's dash and daring, and laughing at his depravity; and it had ended in this! His innocent little pet, the child he had loved, was torn and mangled by the wolf whose deeds he had applauded!

"She was so innocent," he said, with tears in his eyes, "so modest and pure!"

Aunt Sadie sat silent, with tears running down her cheeks and plashing upon her hands. Myrtle had thrown her arms around her aunt's neck and was weeping as if her heart would break. Mr. Watterson was striding through the room with giant strides, his great hands opening and closing convulsively.

"And this woman," continued the General, "who calls herself this po' child's mothah, who should have stood by her and shielded her in this hour of sorrow and desolation —she drives her into the streets at midnight! The child came to me, and she is now at my house wha'h she shall stay until I fo'ce this villain to do her justice. It is necessary that she have medical attendance, and also kind and skillful nu'ses. Will you go to her, Mistress Sadie? The child needs you. Good women, I know," he added, bitterly "are disposed to draw tha'h skirts aside from such as she has become; but you, Madam, are not of these. Will you go?"

"Surely, General," said Aunt Sadie. "I will go at once."

The General bent down and kissed her hand, then reached for his hat and stick.

"I shall call upon Mr. Ma'blemo'," he said, "and learn of him wha'h this young man may be found, and also learn if he is disposed to fo'ce his son to do justice to this wronged girl."

"Hold, General!" cried Mr. Watterson, stretching forth his hand. "Let that mission be mine. Your interference will only awaken Mr. Marblemore's anger. He will not listen to your plea."

"Majah," replied the General, hotly, "I do not go to plead, but to demand. This child has placed herself under my protection, suh, and I shall see that her wrong is righted."

And with that he shouldered his stick and marched out.

Aunt Sadie, hastening up-stairs to make her preparations, came down after a brief absence, dressed for the street. Myrtle, who was sitting weeping near her father, begged her to wait for her, but Aunt Sadie would not.

"Wait until later, Myrtle. Your presence would only shame her more."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH GENERAL HAMILTON MEETS MR. MARBLEMORE.

Mrs. Marblemore, looking extraordinarily fresh and plump and youthful, came softly into the small breakfast room where sat her husband, so deeply absorbed in a newspaper, that he failed to notice her entrance. Smiling merrily she surveyed herself in a large mirror, and with both plump, white hands patted her shimmering hair in place. She wore a pretty morning gown of a pale blue tint, trimmed with flowing lace, which set off her matronly form to much advantage. Mary was one of those fortunate women who mature slowly, and are more beautiful at forty than at twenty. She recalled with a smile her appearance at the latter age, her thin face and large, questioning eyes, her scraggy figure, which she had thought beautiful, and her awkward movements, which at the time had seemed to her the personification of grace. At twenty-five her figure had barely obtained its full development, and for some years afterwards, she had held her own with women much younger; but of late years she had experienced considerable difficulty in keeping her figure within bounds. She had succeeded thus far mainly by a rigorous practice of self-denial. She was not fond of exercising, but she would go for days with barely enough food for a canary, and remain cheerful and fresh colored.

She examined herself now and was rejoiced to note a distinct decline. Noiselessly approaching her husband, she softly placed her hands over his eyes and cried:

"Who is it?"

He caught her hands and kissed them, and drawing them down so that her arms encircled his neck, he looked smiling up into her shining eyes. Clara coming into the room at this moment caught them in this lover-like attitude, and smiled in humorous appreciation.

"Shall I run away and play, like a good little girl?" she cried merrily.

Mary blushed crimson, but the banker only laughed.

"Nonsense, Clara, we were only talking secrets," he cried. "But come," he added, rising briskly, "isn't breakfast ready yet?"

Mary exchanged a kiss with her stepdaughter, who though she laughed, embraced her mother with warm affection. They gathered around the table which was now all set forth with the morning meal. Mr. Marblemore, looking supremely happy and jovial, plunged at once into a lively account of political conditions, as reported in the newspaper. And, indeed, matters were rife with interest. The Republicans at St. Louis in convention assembled, had nominated McKinley, of Ohio, for President, and Bryan, at Chicago, had swept the Democratic Convention off its feet by the might of his wonderful eloquence, and had been chosen the standard bearer of the Democratic party. And the battle was now raging. Locally the leaders were still at dagger's drawn though, curiously enough, the Illinois delegation to the Republican National Convention had acted harmoniously throughout.

"It'll be a Republican landslide," said the banker. "Everything points that way. Cleveland has killed the Democratic party for years to come. And now comes Bryan with his sixteen-to-one," he continued, chuckling. "McKinley 'll win in a walk."

The talk drifted to other matters of current interest. The women were not much interested in politics, but in business, ever since Elmer's plunge into affairs, Mrs. Marblemore was deeply interested. She asked about Elmer now.

"The boy is doing well, Mary," replied Mr. Marblemore, beaming across at his wife. "Davidson writes me that he takes a deep interest in the work, and that he has rendered much assistance in the way of valuable suggestions. We have a right to be proud of the boy."

Mary smiled, glancing at Clara's downcast eyes and indifferent mien.

"I am glad that he is becoming so settled. Who knows what may happen if Clara receives him kindly upon his return?"

"Do not count on me, Mama," said Clara, shaking her head with a frown.

"It would make us very happy, Clara," said her father.

"Would it, Papa?" she replied, thoughtfully. "However, there is no use thinking of it," she added, again shaking her head.

"Is there anyone else, Clara? Is there any other young man whom you favor?"

"No, Papa. They are all alike indifferent to me."

"Now that is not natural, Clara," said the banker, glancing at his wife. She gave him a look of warning and slightly shook her head.

"Is the business on which Davidson and Elmer are engaged, in any way connected with that which took you East, Andrew?" asked Mrs. Marblemore.

"Not at all, Mary," he replied, delighted with the interest she showed in his affairs. "My business has to do with railroads; that upon which Davidson is engaged—but perhaps you would not care to hear of it in detail, Mary?"

"Indeed, yes, Andrew. I am eager to know in what way Elmer has distinguished himself."

"Well, Mary, I am trying to consolidate all the banks of the Middle West into one immense whole. If successful, the thing will, of course, spread and cover the entire country, so that from a central institution, situated in New York, say, or in Chicago, or perhaps Washington, the circulating medium of the nation will be controlled by one gigantic combine. You cannot comprehend, my dear," continued the banker, starting up in great enthusiasm, "what an immense power a man at the head of such a combine will wield! Why, the country will practically be at his mercy. Railroads, monopolies, trusts, businesses of all kinds—the entire commerce, nationally and internationally, will go or cease to go at the word of the man who controls the medium of exchange that keeps in motion vast enterprises as well as petty barterings."

Mary gazed at her husband in speechless admiration. Clara, roused out of her listlessness, clapped her hands.

"Your schemes are vast, Andrew," said Mary.

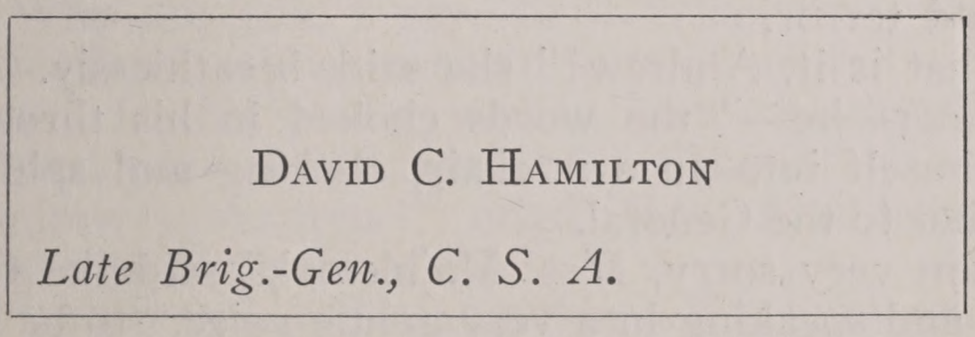
"Yes, Mary, and many," he said, with a laugh, "so

many, in fact, that I hardly know them all. Twenty years ago I thought that by acquiring a farm under mortgage I was doing wonders; ten years ago, if by successfully floating a stock company, I turned ten thousand dollars I regarded myself as a marvel of shrewdness; a year ago I fancied that by thwarting a large lumber combine and gaining control of it, and combining it with other interests in the building line, I would have reached the utmost heights to which I dared aspire; six months ago I thought by merging three railroads in which I had acquired a controlling interest, I would be doing something really great; but all this, Mary, is as nothing compared to the scheme upon which I have not only Davidson and Elmer, but a score of trusted lieutenants at work. This country is vast, my dear, its men are either giants or pigmies, and in business one must range one's self with one or the other—be a man or a mouse. I am a man among men, and in a few years, if my plans carry aright, I will be above them all."

"And what is my poor Elmer's share in all this?" asked Mrs. Marblemore, smiling.

"Why," replied the banker, laughing, "the rogue is really of much assistance to Davidson. Davidson, you must know, is sounding the big men. He does not bother with the smaller fry. He visits the larger cities only—Chicago—St. Louis—Indianapolis—Cleveland—Cincinnati, the large and bustling centers, and he assures me that the boy has once or twice by his quick wit and eager eloquence overcome objections advanced against the thing by men of weight. But what is this?"

A servant entered, bearing a card on a tray. Mr. Marblemore took it up and read:



"General Hamilton!" cried the banker, starting up again, "where is he?"

In the small reception room, adjoining. With an involuntary tightening around the mouth, the banker turned instantly to the door and burst into, rather than entered the room where the General awaited him. The banker wore a rather shabby dressing-gown, loosely corded across his breast, which lent his burly form a rather grotesque look. General Hamilton stood in the middle of the room erect, stiff and dignified. His broad-brimmed hat and stout walking stick he had placed upon a convenient table and, with his hand placed lightly upon his hip, he stood in the most uncompromising attitude possible, confronting the scowling banker.

"To what, sir, am I indebted for this visit?" said, or rather snarled, Mr. Marblemore.

"To yo' son's infu'nal villainy, suh," replied the General, violently. "Mr. Ma'blemo'," he continued, more quietly, "this mo'ning I found a girl, a po' ruined, desu'ted creatcha, lying an outcast in my yard. She is the victim of yo' brat's pu'fidy, suh. He seduced Little Dimples. You know the girl, suh—Rose Rosewood, daughter of Captain Rosewood's widow. He seduced her, suh, robbed her of her honah, ruined her, then fled, the cowa'dly whelp, leaving the po' child to ba'h the shame, the sco'n, and the contumely of the world alone."

In the expression of Mr. Marblemore's face, shame and sorrow held equal sway with anger and astonishment.

"Elmer seduced her!" he said, pressing his hand to his high, bald forehead, "ruined little Rosie! The infernal scoundrel! Mary, come here."

He opened the door behind him, in hot anger, calling upon his wife, who came in pale and trembling in vague alarm and terror.

"What is it, Andrew?" she said, breathlessly.

"Elmer—he—" the words choked in his throat. He threw himself into an arm-chair, choking and spluttering, waving her to the General.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Ma'blemo'," said the General, bowing, and speaking in a very gentle voice, "to be the unhappy means of carrying sorrow to yo' ha'ht, but yo' must lu'hn the truth sooner or later, and it is best impa'ted by me

than by anothah. Try to bear patiently with what I have to say."

She looked at him very earnestly, but said nothing in reply. He pushed forward an arm-chair into which she sank with clasped hands.

"With yo' kind pu'mission, Madam, I will proceed," said the General, bowing with more of ceremony than his wont. "Little Dimples—Rosie, whom you know, is dishonohed, ruined by yo' son Elmer. The po' girl is about to become a mothah, and discovering her guilt, her mothah last night drove her from her do'hs. She came to me and she is in my house now, ill with an illness that may prove fatal to one in her condition, as a result of her night-long exposha' to the cold and damp."

Mrs. Marblemore became very pale and pressed her hands to her heart, but she did not speak.

"I came here this mo'ning," resumed the General, glancing at Mr. Marblemore, who sat there purpling with rage and shame, "to demand justice for this girl."

"To *demand* justice," said Mr. Marblemore, half rising from his seat, but remaining bent forward supporting the weight of his body upon his large hands, which clutched the arms of the chair as he glared at the General. "To *demand* justice, sir," he repeated with emphasis on the word."

"Yes, suh," said the General, sternly, "to *demand* justice. This young man ruined Rosie under promise of marriage and he must fulfill his promise."

"He *must!*" repeated the banker, rising slowly to his feet, and confronting the General, "and who are you, sir, to come into my house—mine! with commands and exactions? Who are you, I say, sir? What have *you* to do with this affair? What concern is it of yours? Is Elmer your son? Is this young woman your daughter? Take yourself and your demands out of my house!"

"Andrew! Andrew!" cried Mrs. Marblemore, approaching him in terror.

He turned to her, his anger in a measure subdued by her appealing voice, but a glance at the cold, contemptuous face of the General inflamed his fury again.

"You come to me with demands, sir—you—" he said. "Leave my house instantly!"

"When you have ceased yo' vapo'ings and mouthings, suh," replied the General, coldly, "I will talk to you, but not befo', fo' in the sacred presence of Mrs. Ma'blemo'," with a courtly bow to her, "I cannot answa' them as they desu've."

"You may answer them or not, as you please," cried the banker, hotly, "but in my house I am master, and I shall speak when and how I see fit, and I see fit to tell you now, sir, that your coming here with demands and exactions is the most consummate piece of impudence that has ever come under my observation. You have been my unrelenting enemy, sir, and for years have taken advantage of your opportunity to abuse and revile me, and this purely out of envy and malice, for I never, to my knowledge, did you harm. I never wittingly offended you in my life. You have called me vulgar, greedy, grasping, a thief, a robber, a corrupter, and a bribe-giver; say I am all this and more, what is it to you?"

"If you have done, suh," said the General, in the same chilling tone as before, "I would—"

"But I have not done," roared the infuriated banker. "What! Am I to be insulted in my own house, and by you from whom I have borne so much? You come to me with demands, saying: 'Your son shall marry this girl.' Then I tell you, sir, that my son shall *not* marry this girl. I would have welcomed her a pure girl with open arms; if she had come to me in her ruin, I would have forced him to take her in her shame; but I tell you, sir, now, that I would rather see him dead, and in hell, than married to this same young woman who has sought your protection in preference to mine!"

He raised his fist on high and yelled forth the words with the utmost fury, standing within two feet of the General, with his great purple face almost thrust into that of his enemy. The General did not stir, but his terrible eyes flashed, his whole frame quivered with anger, and his hands involuntarily closed around his stick which lay on the table beside him; but even in the height of his passion, he remem-

bered Mrs. Marblemore's presence and he stepped back with a bow—an involuntary apology for the thought of violence that had entered into his mind. Perhaps Mr. Marblemore never knew what he owed to Mary's imploring glance.

"I say, sir, and I repeat," said the banker, speaking in quieter tones, "that my son shall not marry this girl. Now what are you going to do about it?"

He folded his arms across his burly chest and looked in vulgar triumph across at the General. What was he going to do about it? What, in heaven's name could he do? There stood the villain's mother, pale and trembling, her eyes overflowing with tears.

"Say you sue him in the courts of law," continued the banker. "I will pay twenty—fifty—a hundred thousand dollars, if need be—but will that marry him to the girl? Say you heap abuse upon him, in your vile paper, will that win him to her? Say you assault him, will that redress her wrongs? Say you kill him in accordance with your Southern ideas of honor, how will it carry out your demands? I repeat, sir, and I await an answer—what are you going to do about it?"

The General's face no longer expressed fierce resolution as at first. He still regarded the banker with a steady, unwavering glance, but there was in it something that perhaps had never blended in that fierce old man's look before—an acknowledgment of defeat and a plea for mercy.

"Mr. Ma'blemo'," he said, speaking slowly and with difficulty, "it is true, as you say, that I can do nothing, either to redress the wrong done to this little girl or to avenge it. I am powe'less, fo' on the one hand no man but you can fo'ce this cowa'dly young man to do justice to Little Dimples, and on the other hand, I would, by striking him, wound and mayhap kill his mothah. I own, suh, that my demands wa'h inconsistent with my power, and thahfo' absu'd, but, suh, you owe it to yo' honoh to exert yo' power in behalf of this outraged girl."

"My honor, sir," said Mr. Marblemore, bitterly. "You have heretofore denied me that quality. Has anything occurred in the last half hour to alter your opinion of me?

Is Marblemore the thief, the robber, the corrupter, the briber, really possessed of that delicate sense of honor as your words imply?"

The General with great difficulty controlled himself, but thinking of poor little Rosie and her impending fate, he did so. Perhaps looking down into the banker's face, which, though distorted now with a sneer of vulgar triumph, had never looked so powerful—perhaps, I say, the grim old man regretted his relentless hatred and persecution.

"Mr. Ma'blemo'," he said, gravely. "Let us forget our enmity, our animosities and prejudices fo' the moment and think only of this ruined girl and of the great wrong practiced upon her. In my public position as edito' of a newspaper, I have in pu'forming my duty as critic on all matters touching upon the public welfa'h, often reflected upon you and the methods employed by you in obtaining a desired end. No doubt I have been severe. I was taught my profession in a school in which the blow of a bludgeon was held in higher esteem than honeyed insinuations which carry neither conviction to the mind of the reader nor terror to the ha'ht of the offender. What I have done is done. I have no apology to make fo' it; fo' those whom I have attacked know in tha'h secret ha'hts that I have been mo' often right than wrong."

He paused for a moment to collect his thoughts. He had spoken throughout in a gentler tone than was usual with him, but his manner was firm and his glance steady. Mr. Marblemore stood with his hand resting on the back of the chair in which his wife sat and the other bent upon his hip, smiling in the same triumphant way.

"Go on, sir," he said. "I like to hear you talk."

"A few months ago Little Dimples was innocent and happy," resumed the General. "She had no troubles to worry her, no sorrows to grieve her, no cares of any kind. Every one who knew her loved her, because she was kind and gentle always, and in every wo'd and look and deed as pure and sweet and modest as a flower. She had many suitors among the young men of this city, and every right to look fo'wahd to happy wife and mothahhood, when this young man, yo' son, suh, stepped in and with little difficulty

won her ha'ht. In a town such as this wha'h social lines are not closely drawn, she was in all respects his equal, and as a pure and innocent woman, imme'shably this young man's superior. He won her rega'd, and under promise of marriage prevailed upon the innocent child to trust him. He wearied of her after a time and left her—fled, suh, leaving her to ba'h the sorrow, the suffering, and the shame alone. Now, suh, is not that a dastardly outrage?"

"Very sad, I must say," commented the banker, ironically. "Very sad indeed."

"This girl will soon become a mothah," continued the General, flashing a murderous glance at the banker, and addressing himself now to Mrs. Marblemore, who sat with downcast eyes before him. "She is about to undergo the fearful pangs of childbu'th without experiencing those feelings of joy and happiness which make them mo' than endurable—welcome to honest wives! It is in yo' power to make her labor a joy, Mrs. Ma'blemo'—Mary, fo' our old friendship gives me the right at this awful moment to address you so. I appeal to you, Mary. You are a woman and a mothah; you can understand this po' girl's feelings. Think, Mary! it is not only her womanhood which by yo' refusal to stand her friend will be trampled in the mire, but that mothahood which is or should be sacred in the eyes of all God's creatchas. Let yo' son marry her and leave her with me then, so she will at least be an honest wife, and able to meet the eyes of her child."

He spoke with great eagerness and the earnestness of his soul lent the words an eloquent and persuasive quality which Mary for one could not resist.

"General," she cried, starting up, "if my pleadings can do anything, believe me, Elmer shall marry little Rosie!"

"Thank you, Mary," replied General Hamilton, bowing low, with his hand on his heart. "I expected nothing less from you."

"But I say again that he shall *not* marry her," roared out the banker, glaring at the General. "Do you hear me, sir? He shall not marry this girl, I repeat. I am master in this house, and of all who dwell within it, and if my will is not obeyed, those who oppose it shall leave it! That is

my last word. Now, sir, go! I have stood your insolence too long. You come here first with demands and then with pleadings, and beneath my very eyes try to turn my wife against me! Go, sir, go! or I shall forget myself—"

"Andrew! Andrew!" cried Mary, rushing into his arms, as, with hands outstretched, he advanced upon the General, who without budging an inch, composedly awaited the threatened onslaught.

"If Mistress Ma'blemo' will retire," began the General, as cold as ice.

"But Mistress Marblemore will *not* retire," roared her infuriated husband, disengaging her arms and drawing her aside, but with all imaginable gentleness. "Mistress Marblemore will in this, as in all things, do as I say, and not as you bid her."

"Mistress Ma'blemo'," said the General, approaching her as she stood by her husband's side, with one arm half around his neck, and resting against his shoulder, "I am sincerely sorry fo' the violence occasioned by my visit here, which has distu'bed you so deeply. Believe me nothing but the ahdent hope of righting the great wrong done to this po' child, whom I love as my own, could have induced me to cross this threshold, knowing that my coming would but provoke hostility and distu'b yo' household. I thank you from my ha'ht fo' the words you have spoken."

He bent over her hand once more, then took up his broad-brimmed hat and heavy stick, and stalked to the door. With his hand on the handle, he turned around, fixing the banker with a glance of flame.

"Ma'blemo'," he said, in a voice which vibrated with a passion truly murderous. "Yo' co'se has fully bawne out my previous conception of yo' foul character. As you value a sound head, suh, do not you again cross my path; or, as a heaven bends above us, I'll strike yo' to the ground!"

The banker replied with a snarl, baring his big teeth in much the fashion of a bull dog uttering a savage defiance. The General brought his stick to a salute sword fashion, and turning strode from the room and from the house.

His enemy gone, the banker strode through the room

a time or two, his brows bent in thought. Mary sat weeping silently.

"Mary—" began the banker, when she interrupted him wildly—

"Oh, Andrew, it is all my fault—mine!" she cried, despairingly. "I—I warned little Rosie, and implored Elmer—but she was so sure of herself—and—and—Elmer assured me so solemnly that he meant her no wrong that—I—Oh, Andrew, he must marry her! he must! he must!"

"Never!" the banker replied, in a voice which she knew to be final. "I am sorry for Rosie, and very angry with Elmer, but a marriage is out of the question. I cannot take into my family a girl so lost to all sense of decency and shame."

"She is young, Andrew, oh, so young!" pleaded Mary, approaching him in her eagerness, and with her hands embracing his arm as he stood half turned from her. "Andrew, be merciful! No one in this world can force Elmer to right this grievous wrong but you. Be kind, dear husband. She is but a child, and we women when we love are—so—weak! So weak, Andrew!"

But the banker was like iron.

"Shall I place a premium upon unchastity?" he cried; "No! this girl was weak enough to allow him to overcome her virtue, she must be strong enough to bear her shame. She is not worthy of the honest name of wife. But I shall find a way to punish Elmer. A scoundrel!"

He bent down and kissed Mary, touched by her tears and woful face.

"Don't cry, Mary," he said gently; "it is very hard I know, but it strikes me, too, for I love the boy, and my only fear now is that I cannot maintain anger against him. And I was so delighted with him this morning! Don't cry Mary."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OF LITTLE ROSIE.

Too impatient to await the phaeton, her usual conveyance, Aunt Sadie hastened afoot to the General's headquarters. She could walk very fast when she chose, and she chose now. People meeting the good lady and knowing her usual mission wondered much who the patient could be demanding such uncommon exertion. Mam Sue received her with many gutteral exclamations of sorrow and straightway led her to the sick chamber. Rosie started up with a cry at Aunt Sadie's entrance, then sank back again with a long convulsive shudder, moaning piteously.

"Rosie," said Aunt Sadie, softly, sitting down beside the bed. "Look at me, dear."

"No, no; I can't, I can't," sobbed Rosie, covering her face with her hands.

"Dear Rosie, it is only me, your old auntie."

"Please go 'way!" moaned the stricken girl. "Please, please, don't look at me!"

"Come, child, I am here to nurse you, and you must obey your nurse always. You are not well, my dear. You were out all night in the cold, the General told me. And so you must be taken care of, and I've come to take care of you until you get well and strong again."

Rosie became quieter by degrees, as Aunt Sadie talked in her gentle, caressing tones, telling of her surprise at the General's early visit, and of her sorrow on learning of her little pet's sickness, and of her haste in coming, and of her determination to remain as nurse, until the fever should have been vanquished utterly.

"Do you *know,* Auntie?" whispered Rosie, presently without looking up.

"Yes, Rosie," replied Aunt Sadie, quietly.

Rosie's wan cheeks burned like fire; she turned away, sobbing and trembling.

"Rosie!" Aunt Sadie was kneeling now, bending over the little sufferer. Tears were streaming from her eyes; gently she kissed the child's averted face. "Look at Auntie, dear."

She brought the shamed face around with a gentle hand and gazed down into the girl's despairing eyes, with a gaze so tender and loving that Rosie cried out, and in a moment her arms were around Aunt Sadie's neck, and she was pouring out her little heart, like a child in the arms of its mother.

"Oh, I am so ashamed, Auntie!" she whispered brokenly. "I shall die. . . . I do not want to live. We were married like the lovers in the play. You remember, Auntie? . . . We weren't really and truly married. . . . I loved him so. . . . It hurt me to be unkind to him. And he was so good to me, and loved me dearly, dearly! . . . His cruel father forbade him to call on me; he said so. . . . He stayed away after a while, and I was so sick and frightened, Auntie. . . . Mama beat me. She hated me. She never did love me, Auntie. . . . Mama found it out, and last night . . . she drove me out into the cold, and she wouldn't open the door, though I knocked ever so hard, and cried and cried. . . .It was cold, Auntie, so cold! I thought I would die. . . . I came to the good General's, having no place to go. . . . I was afraid to call him, and so I stayed outside all night. . . . . Carlo found me this morning, and the good General took me in. . . . I'm glad you love me still, Auntie. I thought nobody would ever love me any more. The General frightened me so this morning. . . . H—he will hurt Elmer. You won't—let—him—hurt—Elmer—Auntie?"

"No, dear; the General shall not hurt him."

"Because he loves me, Auntie, really and truly," continued Rosie more coherently. "He's good. He didn't want to go away, but his father sent him. He said so. He hates me—his father does—and Clara; and his Mama told me ever so long ago not to love him. . . . He loves me, Auntie, and how could I help loving him and trusting him, when everything seemed so real in the play. . . . You saw it, Auntie? How they clasped hands and repeated the

marriage service, and how it was pronounced a real, true marriage. You remember, Auntie? And a long time after Elmer and I did just as the lovers in the play. . . . And you said it wasn't a true marriage, because anything can happen in a play. And I was so frightened, and—and, oh, I'm bad Auntie! You mustn't love me 'cause I'm bad. Myrtle won't love me when she knows!"

"Yes, Rosie. She wanted to come with me."

"Oh, don't let her come, Auntie!" Rosie cried out in terror. "I should die of shame."

She broke into an incoherent account of what had transpired the night before. The light of fever was in her eyes. Aunt Sadie did what she could to relieve the little sufferer, who sank by degrees into a semi-conscious state, in which condition Doctor Fairfield found her. The doctor came in, accompanied by the General, and, nodding cordially to Aunt Sadie, fell at once to examining Rosie. The General went below stairs during the examination, and, sending Mam Sue to render any assistance possible, he went wandering restlessly about the yard, followed questioningly by Carlo. Aunt Sadie joined him presently.

"The doctor fears that brain fever will develop," she said, in answer to the General's query. "Absolute quiet is necessary and skillful attendance. I shall stay, and Mam Sue shall help me."

The General told of his fruitless mission of the morning and fiercely denounced the banker.

"You can hardly blame Andrew, General," said Aunt Sadie gently. "Few men would have acted otherwise. It is to Elmer we must look for righting this grievous wrong."

By night Rosie was wildly delirious. She babbled continuously of the things that for so long had troubled her mind. Bursting now into childish cries of delight, now chuckling in ghastly merriment, or moaning and sighing piteously, she passed the long night; and to Aunt Sadie sitting there, alert and anxious, and to General Hamilton, wandering in and out, was revealed the truth in all its horrible nakedness. In broken sentences, with heart-rending sighs and moans, the girl went over and over the incidents of the night of her seduction, and vividly pictured to

her horror-stricken hearers the long and arduous struggle that preceded it.

Now she was a pure girl, full of modest thoughts and girlish aspirations, burning with ardent hopes and dreams of happiness as Elmer's wife, tremblingly receiving his addresses, full of hope and pride and courage, and now hopeless, sad and disillusioned she fled from him as from one she feared, protesting with every breath against his pursuit, but with every breath betraying her passion and her weakness. She accompanied Elmer to the play, and once more went through the marriage ceremony as enacted upon the stage, laughing and protesting her disbelief all the time, yet more than half believing. Then her horror as the truth dawned in full upon her, her shame, her anguished pleadings with her faithless lover. Over and over again she wandered through these harrowing scenes, mingling thoughts of her friends with pleas to her lover and timid supplications to her mother. Her delirious cries fell piteously upon the ears of her compassionate auditor. Aunt Sadie was too grief-stricken to do aught but sigh and weep. The General's wrath was fearful to see.

"Tell me, Madam!" he said passionately, "does not this man desu've death?"

"Death, General, never righted a wrong in this world," replied Aunt Sadie gently.

"But it avenges!" said the fierce old man.

"Vengeance should find no place in the heart of a brave man, dear friend."

"Is nothing to be done? Nothing?" asked the General, gazing with tear-dimmed eyes down at the restless little sufferer. "Is he to be pu'mitted to go unscathed?"

"It lies in the hands of God."

"True," muttered the General with bitter irony. "'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lo'd!"

"God does not avenge: He forgives."

The General was silenced. Aunt Sadie, nearly heartbroken, sat down again and fell to crying softly. Elmer's unexampled villainy as revealed by the raving girl struck her to the heart, for she had loved this youth dearly, and even now recalled with wonder his goodness and manifold

graces as a child. She had never dreamed that he could be capable of wronging a living creature.

"What would Aunt Sadie say," murmured Rosie over and over again; and Aunt Sadie, listening miserably, prayed to God for charity to forgive, but could find none in her heart.

"Oh, why, why, why did you not come to me?" she cried out once to the unconscious little victim.

So passed the night. In the morning Mam Sue once more resumed the watch. Doctor Fairfield arrived early, and ere Aunt Sadie had gone Myrtle came. Aunt Sadie took Myrtle by the hand, and led her without a word to Rosie's couch, and, holding up a finger to caution her not to speak, watched her grave face as she slowly gathered the meaning of Rosie's delirious mutterings.

"But we are not married, Elmer," Rosie giggled. "Aunt Sadie says not. No, I didn't tell her. . . . Our marriage isn't true! . . . She says anything can happen in a play. Oh, I knew it at the time!" A pause. "I do, I do, oh, I do trust you, Elmer," continued Rosie in changed tones. "I love you. Don't say that, Elmer. You hurt me. I can't help it. . . . It's wrong, it is! It is! It is! It's bad; it's wicked. You must go away. Aunt Sadie wouldn't love me any more if she knew!" Another pause. Aunt Sadie gazed at Myrtle through a blur of tears. Surprise, horror, anger and burning indignation struggled for mastery in the expression of Myrtle's face. She clasped her Aunt convulsively, shuddering as from cold. "*Are* we married, Elmer?" the murmur went on, "really and truly married? Oh, I can't believe it! I know it was a true marriage in the play, but it seems so strange to be married like that. We'll be married again, won't we, Elmer, but not by Mr. Ringrose. . . . He looks at me so and—and—Mama is so hard on me. When shall we be married really and truly, Elmer?" Again a pause, and again the girl went on in tones of growing anguish. "Elmer! Elmer! you must marry me all over again. You must! You must! I shall die if you don't. I am your wife, though nobody will believe. . . . Didn't we clasp hands and repeat the words like the lovers in the play? And their marriage was

binding. It really was, although they were married again! . . . God have mercy! He won't come to me. Elmer! Mama!"

Rosie gasped for breath, opening and closing her hands convulsively.

"Good God! Auntie, is this thing possible?" murmured Myrtle, who was quick to grasp the meaning underlying these broken sentences.

But in all this blackness, this chaos unutterable, there was one beam of light that filled them all with gladness. Rosie was not as guilty as they had at first supposed. There had been a kind of ceremony between the lovers. Elmer had been utterly unable to overcome the girl, much as she had loved him, without it. Without doubt, Rosie had felt herself bound irrevocably to Elmer by that ceremony, even though she may have felt some doubts as to its truth in the eyes of the law. Morally she was his wife, and, believing this, she had trusted in him to right her in all minor points; but though he had failed her in this, though betrayed and deserted and left to live or die an outcast, she was before God his wife and an honest woman.

The news of Rosie's ruin spread with amazing rapidity. The name of her seducer was in every mouth, and the indignation was widespread among the young girl's friends. Mrs. Rosewood found herself unpleasantly notorious. Her action in driving her daughter from her house stirred the community to its depth. She was ignominiously ejected from the Clarenceburg Woman's League by the indignant dames comprising that virtuous body. She was boycotted by all. Boys hooted her in the street, and her former friends and neighbors avoided her like a poisonous thing whose touch defiled.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN WHICH THE WOMAN'S PROGRESSIVE UNION PASSES A RESOLUTION.

The Woman's Progressive Union, of which Myrtle was the head and founder, met a few days later, and the attendance was unusually large; even Clara, who had not shown herself at the clubroom for many weeks, was present. The girls, with Rosie's calamity fresh in mind, looked for the most part sad and depressed as they stood about in groups, whispering while awaiting the fall of the gavel which would call the meeting to order. Clara's presence was oppressive to all, for not only was she not a general favorite, but her relationship to the man known to be Rosie's seducer made the matter difficult of discussion; and Myrtle, in calling them together, had intimated a purpose of addressing them on this very subject. However, Myrtle was not one to be deterred from a duty which she felt to be Rosie's due.

"Girls," she said, when, in answer to her call for order, they had gathered around the long table, "you all know of Rosie's ruin and disgrace, but you do not know how really innocent she is, how guiltless of real wrong. Without doubt, if the severity necessary in judging the sin of which Rosie is deemed guilty would admit of a close scrutiny into the circumstances surrounding its commission, we would in most cases find that the woman is more sinned against than sinning; but this may not be. The principle involved is so pure and holy that all that might be pleaded in extenuation of its slightest infraction is justly ignored in the uncompromising condemnation of an outraged society. But not so in the case of Rosie. I do not say that she was guiltless of wrong; on the contrary, she was very weak and foolish to keep secret from her friends her relations with this man, but, girls, before God, Rosie is his wife."

A general cry went around the room at this, a cry expressive of incredulity, amazement and wonder.

"She was not married by a minister, but she is none the less his wife," continued Myrtle.

She then gave a brief but comprehensive account of the deception practiced upon Rosie as revealed by the duped girl in her delirious ravings. The girls listened with breathless interest. Many recalled the play in question, and declared their conviction even then that the fictitious marriage was binding. It had been so declared in the argument, and indeed the entire plot had revolved around it.

"Such a marriage is, or was, legal and binding in certain parts of Scotland, I believe," said Myrtle, "and the scenes of this story were laid in that country. Rosie was married exactly as the lovers were married in the play, and though this marriage would be pronounced invalid in law, it is none the less true and sacred."

"What you say is the merest nonsense," said Clara, rising and confronting them all. She met the startled eyes turned in full upon her with a sneer of insolent scorn. "Rosie is every bit as bad as Elmer," she continued, pronouncing the name with scornful emphasis. "She is worse. All she wanted was a pretext, and he gave it to her. She always was a little hypocrite, and I always hated her. You can't make her out an angel," she concluded, meeting Myrtle's eyes with a glance full of animosity.

"You mistake me, Clara," said Myrtle, coloring painfully. "I am not trying to make her out an angel. We are none of us angels, heaven knows! I expressly state her weakness in submitting in all things to this man, but I consider it only right and just to point out at the same time the moral strength underlying that weakness which enabled her to repulse him, forcing him at the last in pure desperation to resort to a subterfuge so nearly resembling lawful marriage that a girl so innocent and trusting as Rosie may well have accepted it as binding in law, as she truly did morally."

"Bah!" said Clara contemptuously.

"Clara," said Myrtle, with dignity, "you are not required to accept another's opinions, but until, in refuting them, you can advance something other than expressions

born of spite and illfeeling, I must request you to refrain from interrupting."

The rich red color in Clara's cheeks overspread her brow and neck, dyeing the whole an angry pink, as she once more rose to her feet. "Myrtle," she said, in a voice of concentrated fury, "I hate you. I despise you all. I am done with you."

And with these bitter words upon her lips she swept from the room. A deep silence followed. The girls looked at each other with awe, but their lips twitched, and they exchanged glances of droll amusement. Regard for Myrtle alone restrained a riotous demonstration of glee. Poor Myrtle sat in silent misery. The loss of Clara's friendship pained her exceedingly. She could not guess wherein she had failed her friend, but Clara's coldness and animosity, which culminated in this evening's rupture, had been of long duration.

"I am very, very sorry, girls," she said, looking around beseechingly. "I do not know what has come over Clara of late. She used to be so sweet and good-natured."

"Don't mind, Myrtle," said Fanny, vigorously; "she's a good riddance. Everybody knows she hates Elmer."

"Hush! dear; let us return to Rosie. I wished, my dears, to ask you to continue her friends, to go to her and show her that you still love her and esteem her an honest woman. *He* will be invited to all houses upon his return. *He* will mingle with virtuous women on terms of social intimacy. Rosie is ruined, irretrievably ruined in the eyes of the world. No matter what we know of the circumstances, it will influence no one. We must remain her friends and by our friendship help her to start life anew. Let us show ourselves above that false sentiment which prompts women to draw aside their horrified skirts at sight of such as she has become. After all, are we so much better, purer, stronger than little Rosie? How many of us have been under temptation? Many a woman who looks with shuddering horror upon a fallen sister owes the preservation of her virtue to the upright character of the man she loved rather than to her own innate strength. Poor Rosie loved the wrong man."

"I make a motion," said Fanny, rising in her place, "that this body pass a resolution denouncing Elmer Marblemore as a villain."

"But, Fanny, Fanny," cried Myrtle, aghast.

Her feeble protest was drowned out and overwhelmed by a chorus of shrieks expressive of general approval.

"Further," continued Fanny sturdily, "that we pledge ourselves to hold no social intercourse with this young man until he shall have repaired the wrong done our fellow-member in the only way in which it can be repaired—by marrying her again so that she may be really and truly his wife."

A second chorus of shrieks eloquently attested the enthusiasm of Fanny's companions.

"And, lastly," pursued Fanny, "that we pledge ourselves to cherish Rosie as our friend and to do all in our power to assist her to start life anew; this resolution to be published every day for four weeks in all the newspapers of the city."

The tumult by this time had assumed such proportions that Fanny had, perforce, to sit down and cling tightly to her chair, for the girls, quite beside themselves with excitement, were crowding around her, shrieking like mad creatures, all bent on hugging her at once. Myrtle sat in deep dismay. However well qualified intellectually to head such a body in times of peace, she was far too timid by nature to lead in times of war; whereas a little madcap of scarce seventeen, as full of mischief as a monkey when all was serene, assumed the reins in troublous times like one to the manner born.

"Myrtle," said Fanny, "draw up the resolution. You must, dear; no one can do it so well."

"But, Fanny—girls—pray consider," cried Myrtle. In secret she was rejoicing with a great joy at this glorious demonstration of outraged womanhood, coming, as it did, from a body called into being by her and representing, if not her peculiar theories, at least the principles for which she stood. Nevertheless, she quaked inwardly. "Do not act rashly, girls," she pleaded weakly.

"We are determined to make an example of this young man," said Fanny, resolutely. "We wish to show that the

outrage of which he is guilty cannot be perpetrated with impunity."

"Wait, Fanny," said Grace Fairfield, a girl scarce older but more quiet and sedate than turbulent Fanny. "Myrtle never speaks without reason; so let us hear what she has to say before acting."

"I hesitate partly because I fear that, after the first enthusiasm, you will repent."

"We shall never repent of befriending little Rosie," cried Fanny, impetuously.

"No, no, Fanny; but will such action on our part do this? Will it not, on the contrary, harden this young man against her?"

"This is not a question of individual woman, but of our common womanhood," cried Fanny, hotly.

"Fanny is right, Myrtle," said Grace gravely. "You are, of course, considering the question from the standpoint of Rosie alone, as Fanny began by doing, but it is a matter that concerns us all. I believe that such action as Fanny recommends is highly needful; but in expressing our indignation against this man we must also and with equal emphasis condemn the weakness of which Rosie was guilty—else it will look as if we were upholding her in the sin of which the world deems her guilty."

Myrtle beamed gratefully upon Grace, then turned her hopeful eyes upon Fanny. The light of battle was in Fanny's eyes. She had in the first place taken the high ground of principle, and, in the second place, she would by no means allow that the world's opinion of Rosie was worth considering. Rosie was innocent. She had without doubt thought herself married to Elmer. She had witnessed a play in which just such a marriage had been pronounced legal and binding, but to all this Grace demurred, differing from both Fanny and Myrtle in this that she did not think any young woman of ordinary understanding could be deceived in that way. The question was discussed with great spirit. Grace stood almost alone, but she held her own nobly against Fanny's cohorts. Myrtle took no part in it, but she listened with interest and waited with anxiety the outcome. Fanny was quick, brilliant and full of vivacity

and spirit. Grace was quiet, grave and reflective. She was naturally a gentle little creature, but she also was deeply religious, and having just attained the dignity of young ladyhood, her reflective bent of mind inclined her to severity.

"This young man had courted her for a long time," she said, "and she could not but have been aware of his dishonorable designs upon her. Then why did she not turn from him?"

"She loved him very dearly," said Fanny, "and love, they say, weakens resolution."

"It should, on the contrary, strengthen it. I do not say," continued Grace with a slight blush, "that she should have torn this love from her heart, that she should have given up this young man because he was not in all things worthy; but if she had borne herself with firmness and dignity, if from the outset she had demanded the respect which was her due, who can doubt that this young man would have respected her? And if his love for her had been founded on esteem, he would certainly have married her."

"You are too severe, Grace," said Fanny. "It is much as Myrtle said in the beginning. Who can say what we would do under like circumstances?"

"I'm afraid, Fanny, that you did not take Myrtle's meaning. Those very words embodied all her censure. Myrtle's opposition to the action we propose is founded partly on a fear that we may regret our precipitancy later, and partly upon her sense of responsibility, but chiefly, I imagine, upon some unacknowledged doubts that Rosie is much to blame in this matter. She is so tender of her friends, our dear Myrtle," said Grace with an affectionate glance at her friend, "that she could not bear to say one word in censure of Rosie's weakness without implying that under similar circumstances she herself might have been equally guilty; which," added Grace, shaking her head very sternly, "which is absurd. Myrtle, moreover, saw at once that we could not act in this matter without increasing Rosie's burden of sorrow, but act we must, even though in striking at this man, we still further wound Rosie. Rosie is our friend, our sister; in despoiling her he has attacked us

all, for our own future protection we must expose and punish him."

"Prepare the resolution, Myrtle," cried Fanny.

"The resolution! the resolution!" came the cry from all sides.

"Are you resolved?"

"Yes, yes."

"We could without taking such action befriend little Rosie and ignore her seducer socially," continued Myrtle, coaxingly.

But on this point Grace joined forces with Fanny and utterly routed their timid leader.

"Then—but do you write it, Grace. My pen would be sure to run away with me, and in place of a concise statement of our purpose I would produce a terrible treatise on the prevailing standard of the sexes."

"Grace may write it," said Fanny, "but we will not admit one word of censure of little Rosie."

"Not a word," cried Daisy, and the crowd shrieked its approval.

"You mistake me, Fanny," cried Grace with heat. "I do not wish to censure Rosie; the poor thing has suffered enough, Heaven knows! I wish merely to make clear to the world our rigid and uncompromising adherence to the letter and spirit of the law given forth in the seventh commandment, so that our position may not be misconstrued as an endorsement, as it were, of woman's frailty."

"But who would be foolish enough to put such a construction upon an action which in its very nature declares that very thing," cried Fanny in disgust.

"It is as Grace says, Fanny," said Myrtle hastily, interrupting what promised to be a lively tiff. "The world will judge from the conclusion purely without in the least considering the premises, and our action may easily be twisted so as to give to it an appearance of toleration which we are far from feeling. But if we *must* take such action,—and indeed, indeed, girls—"

"We must, we must," came the chorus.

"Then we can easily do so without attaching the shadow of blame or censure to a girl whom we believe to be

innocent or leaving an excuse for misconstruction. After all, it is not a question of Rosie's innocence, but of this young man's guilt. It is the principle of the thing. The best thing then, for us to do, my dears, is to confine ourselves to a simple statement of our purpose. The newspapers in publishing our resolution may be trusted to tell the story that called it forth. You, Fanny, shall head the committee that waits upon the editors."

She drew a sheet of paper towards her, and taking up a pen wrote rapidly for a few moments, during which the girls maintained a rigid silence as if they were attending a solemn ceremony.

"Listen, girls," said Myrtle, when she had finished writing, and she read as follows:

"Resolved—That, whereas, our friend and fellow member, Rosalind Rosewood, has been cruelly betrayed by Elmer Marblemore, we, the members of the Woman's Progressive Union, denounce the said Elmer Marblemore as a despoiler of homes and an enemy to virtuous womanhood, and herewith declare a social ban against him until he shall have repaired the wrong done our fellow member, by honorable marriage. We call upon all good men and women to uphold our hands in this and ask them to aid us in carrying the ban into effect."

"Good! Good!" was the general cry.

Fanny alone was dissatisfied. She wished to add a clause pledging the Union's friendship to Rosie, but Myrtle cried out against this, and, aided by Grace and a few of the more grave and thoughtful, succeeded after much persuasive argument in quelling the riot with which Fanny's obstinacy threatened them.

"We can continue her friends, you know, Fanny," urged Myrtle, "but we need not proclaim it from the housetops."

Fanny yielded in the end, but not without candidly expressing her scorn of Myrtle's cowardice.

"Now, girls," said Myrtle, when peace was restored, "before putting this resolution to a vote, which I anticipate will be unanimous, I would like to say a few words in

warning of the consequences likely to follow its publication. This action, you must know, will be a very serious departure and it may be far-reaching in its consequences. What we are proposing to do is practically a reversion of traditional practice. Hitherto, society in a sin of this kind has condemned the woman utterly, while ignoring the criminality of her partner in guilt. In this, society has been only half wrong; both parties being equally guilty should have received equal punishment; that is what we propose to do—punish the man by placing him beyond the pale of respectable society as the woman by her very sin is placed, until he shall have redeemed the past in the manner pointed out in our Resolution. In taking this initiative step we are laying ourselves open to severe criticism, the more especially as we are all unmarried women, conventionally supposed to know nothing about such things—or knowing them, are expected to assume the hypocritical mien of ignorance. I counsel you, therefore, to continue resolutely in the path laid out. We may be rash but we are right. Pay no attention to adverse comment. Be brave and prudent. Do not talk, or if you must speak, be sure to make clear our position. Let no one think that we are upholding or endorsing or defending that in the woman which we condemn in the man."

This little speech as part of the solemn ceremony was received in absolute silence. The resolution was then put to a vote and passed unanimously. Committees were then appointed to wait upon the editors, the principal dames of the city, and lastly upon the Clarenceburg Woman's League. Fanny was placed at the head of the first, Grace took charge of the second, and Myrtle, foreseeing considerable difficulty with the haughty dames comprising the elder body, undertook the leadership of the third in person. The three Committees took in every girl belonging to the Club.

"Go to Mrs. Butler first, Fanny," said Myrtle, in giving her final instruction. "She does not fear Mr. Marblemore, and being a woman, is governed more by sentiment than business. Let her have her own way in everything and she will be sure to stand by us throughout the fight. The General we are sure of. It will perhaps do no harm to

mention him casually to the editor of the *Globe,* should he show reluctance to open up his columns to us. Do you first of all go to Mrs. Marblemore, Grace; inform her of our purpose, but assure her of our dearest love and esteem. I will visit as many members of the League as possible before presenting myself before it as a body."

The girls separated and went to their homes, quaking a little inwardly, no doubt, but firmly resolved to carry the thing through. For the next few days there was a lively skirmishing about. The townspeople stared rather to meet here and there with groups of ten or a dozen young women, all grave of countenance and seriously intent on the business in hand. On the evening of the third day, as a result of Fanny's efforts, the *Times* published the story of Rosie's seduction in full, and made public the action taken by the Woman's Progressive Union in consequence, and Mrs. Butler, the intrepid editor of that enterprising journal, took occasion to warmly commend the young women whose names appeared one and all boldly signed to the Resolution. The *Herald* followed full cry after the *Times.* Even the *Globe,* which was said to be controlled by the great banker, did not dare to wholly ignore the matter, and to this small fire of musketry succeeded on Saturday the *Chronicle's* heavy artillery.

The Clarenceburg Woman's League, after some hesitation, due to Mrs. Delaware's unwillingness to follow the initiative of its younger rival, gave ear to Myrtle's earnest representations and endorsed the resolution by a clear majority, thus at once stamping it with the seal of its weighty approval, and binding its members severally to act in earnest co-operation with the younger women; and finally, as a result of Grace's endeavors, good women everywhere banded together, fully determined to carry the ban pronounced by the Union into effect. Men said little but thought much, and their thought resolved itself into a quiet determination to uphold their women at all hazards.

The uproar for a time was prodigious. Out-of-town newspapers took the matter up and discussed it freely, and before long the metropolitan press, attracted as much by the prominent names involved as by the novelty of the sub-

ject, were printing columns about it. Myrtle was no less astonished than delighted to observe that the tone of this widespread comment was overwhelmingly in praise of the Union's courageous action. She had been willing, as leader of the Union, to take upon herself the responsibility of that body's utterance, but seeing the turn matters had taken, she promptly diverted the attention which was beginning to center around herself into its proper channel, and Fanny, the intrepid little pioneer, awoke one morning to find herself famous. Her frantic protests were all in vain; she declared that Grace Fairfield and not she was the guilty wretch. Grace emphatically denied it, and as all the girls united in declaring Fanny the instigator of that momentous action, the glory rested finally with her.

Mr. Marblemore, immersed to the ears in business, paid little heed to the clamor around him. Mrs. Marblemore, as may be supposed, was deeply grieved and shocked by it all, but on the whole, she worried very little after the first surprise. Her interest now all centered in her husband whose business interests about this time compelled him to frequent and prolonged absences from home. Clara saw fit to assume an air of haughty reserve towards her former associates, and early in the fight she took occasion to write to the newspapers, correcting them in their reports of an *unanimous* vote favoring the adoption of the now famous resolution. She defended Elmer everywhere, and spoke bitterly of Myrtle, whom, despite all contradictions, she persisted in declaring the prime instigator of the movement against Elmer.

At the General's headquarters, meanwhile, little Rosie lay hovering between life and death, anxiously watched over by Aunt Sadie and the General. For weeks she lay, a pitiful little figure, tossed and torn in the throes of an all-consuming fever out of which she emerged at last, a mere shadow, so weak and wan and wasted that the immortal spark all but fled its earthly abode. The little life she harbored went out ere she recovered consciousness, leaving her without an incentive to stimulate in her that love of life, which is an absolute essential to recovery.

Aunt Sadie became passionately attached to the patient

little sufferer during those weeks of darkness and despair. As her strength slowly returned, many visitors came to see her. Myrtle, Fanny, Daisy and Grace Fairfield, in fact, all the girls from the Club called at the General's headquarters, and all tried to show their unaltered regard and friendship. Rosie was deeply touched by their kindness, but to tell the truth, she would hardly have been less happy if they had stayed away. Their presence shamed her. She felt that in accepting their friendship, she was guilty of willful deception. They believed her wholly innocent and blameless, but deep in her heart there was an uneasy consciousness of guilt, and this feeling forbade her receiving the friendly advances made by these pure women in the spirit in which they were tendered.

"Tell them I was bad, Auntie," she whispered once. "They think not, Auntie, but I was. I knew!"

"Do not mind, Rosie," Aunt Sadie replied.

"But they do not know, Auntie," the girl persisted. "They think I am good when I am not. I loved him so."

Aunt Sadie did take measures to bar the chatterboxes from the sick room, thinking that their girlish gayety hurt the poor little sufferer. She did not fathom Rosie's real motive for wishing to rid herself of these girls. She could not read the girl's heart, nor know how tenderly she cherished the memory of this man whom they hated so. Yes, she loved Elmer still; loved him devotedly and entirely. There was no censure in her heart for him. She had long ago reasoned away every shadow of doubt. It was his cruel, hard-hearted father who had sent him away from her. He would have married her, he loved her dearly, and secretly she cherished the trembling hope that he would return to her. As time passed this hope became to her a certainty, an article of faith. She became very quiet when his name was mentioned in her presence. These girls, who so prided themselves upon the action they had taken against him, who openly spoke of him as of a moral leper—she hated them; they misjudged him; how could they know how dearly he had loved her?

For he had loved her dearly, dearly. In her heart she cherished the memory of their parting; his gentleness, his

tender kisses, and kind speech; in her bosom lay the note, the little farewell letter, in which he spoke of their re-union and future happiness. And thinking of all this, little Rosie bitterly resented the attitude taken by her friends towards him. She confided her hopes to none save Mam Sue, who heartily concurred in all her little darling's dreams and expectations.

"Don't you think he'll come back to me, Mam Sue?" Rosie would say a hundred times a day, smiling wanly from her pillows.

"Indeedy, he'll come back to mah honey. Indeedy he will," Mam Sue would cry, with many energetic nods, and a scornful pursing of the lips, in token of bitter defiance of various imaginary disputants. "Don' I know him, honey sweet? He can't help it; he's gotta come back to mah lily darlin'."

"He loves me, Mam Sue; he often said so. He was always good to me," murmured Rosie.

"Oh, if you only had lubed Massa Sher'm, now," Mam Sue replied, blubbering. "Oh! oh! oh! if you only had lubed Mas' Sher'm. He's good, Massa Sher'm is, honey."

"No, Mam Sue, no," Rosie would reply, puckering her little forehead impatiently. "Sherman belongs to Myrtle. It is Elmer I love. How could I love Sherman when I love Elmer? Elmer's good. It was his father that sent him away. Don't I know?"

"Yaas, honey, yaas, dearie," said Mam Sue, soothingly. "He come back to my lily honey. Just yo' wait. He 'um jes' gotta' come back. Yaas, honey, darlin'!"

"When he comes, Mam Sue," whispered Rosie, brightly smiling, "don't tell him I'm *very* sick. Carry me to my chair beside the window, and then bring him to me when everybody else has gone away. Nobody must know. Above all, don't tell the General," cautioned Rosie.

"No, honey, neber! Cross ma heart! Gawd strike me dead to everlastin' everlastin' amen if Ah do!" promised Mam Sue, rolling her eyes.

Aunt Sadie coming in unexpectedly one day found Rosie weeping sorely with her arms around the faithful

black woman's neck, and Mam Sue blubbering in stormy sympathy.

"What is it, Rosie?" she asked, gently.

"I was thinking, Auntie," the girl replied, tremulously.

"Of whom, my dear?"

"Of Elmer!" burst out Rosie, suddenly, covering her face with her hands and sobbing wildly. "Oh, I love him, Auntie, and he loves me I know. See his letter to me, Auntie, his last letter, which Jacques brought to me when he was sent away so suddenly." She eagerly drew from her bosom Elmer's farewell note, which Aunt Sadie had carefully guarded where she had found it upon the girl's heart. "See, Auntie, he says: 'We shall be happy together yet, you and I.' Do you see, Auntie? And don't you think he'll come back to me?"

Aunt Sadie was surprised and grieved to find the girl so deep in love, so strong of faith, in spite of all that had happened.

"Oh, he loves me, Auntie," cried Rosie, eagerly. "You should have seen how sweet, how gentle, he was with me the night before his father sent him away. Don't you think he'll come back, Auntie?"

"Yes, Rosie, I do believe so," said Aunt Sadie.

"Oh my sweet Auntie!" cried Rosie, smiling rapturously.

They spoke of him often after that, and in time Aunt Sadie came to assume a tone of hopeful cheerfulness that charmed Rosie and confirmed her in her faith. In very truth, Aunt Sadie could not bring herself to believe Elmer utterly bad. She had known him so long, had loved him so dearly; he was so sweet and gentle, that she could not but believe that if rightly approached, he would do justice to Rosie. So she spoke cheerfully of his return, and awaited that event hopefully; but as the weeks and months receded, and Rosie instead of becoming stronger, faded more and more, her ardent hope settled gradually into resigned despair, and she sadly reflected that her little friend was doomed to pay the final penalty of life to the love, which if rightly placed, would have borne fruit in happiness immeasurable.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CONVENTION.

As the time for holding the State Convention approached, Dillingham's strength, which had grown day by day through the summer, inspired the gravest fears in the breasts of Watterson's adherents. Dick's movements, his doings and sayings, his comings and goings, had now become a matter of wide importance. A genial fellow, full of quaint sayings, he was followed about wherever he went, and surrounded whatever he happened to be, by newspaper reporters and artists, who wrote him up and pictured him from every possible point of view.

Watterson's downfall was freely predicted, but curiously enough as this presentiment spread, the feeling against the big Boss began to change. Weighty editorials began to appear under such captions as: "After Watterson, What?" "The Coming Boss," "The End of Watterson," "Watterson and Dillingham," and the like. The two fighting bosses were compared, their qualities reviewed, their characteristics analyzed, and by contrast with Dillingham, Watterson shone with the brightness of the noonday sun. The thing caught fire and spread. Democratic as well as Republican organs throughout the State made Watterson their principal theme. He was spoken of admiringly, eulogistically, by all, but always in the past tense. He was allowed to have possessed certain qualities of mind and heart which would be looked for in vain in his successor.

"His personal integrity was undoubted," said the Chicago *Record,* an independent newspaper of enormous circulation.

"He never sold his influence for legislative purposes," declared the Chicago *Tribune,* the leading Republican newspaper of the West, but the organization's inveterate enemy.

"His influence had always been for good: witness the Forestry Bill which he defeated," cried the Bloomington *Star.*

"He never sought political preferment," conceded the Springfield *Bulletin.*

"Watterson was a man, every inch of him," said the Chicago *Courier.* "A patriot who has served his country in the battlefield—a genius in organization—a statesman of real ability, who preferred to remain modestly in the background and do his work through others. So long as our political system continues in its present imperfect state, so long will organization in politics be necessary, and under these conditions, men such as Watterson are not a curse, but a blessing. The power he has as leader of the dominant party arrogated to himself, he used, as is now universally conceded, to further the interests of the great common people. Will his successor do the same? Wait and see!"

"The organization which he founded was not conceived in a bar-room," hotly declared the Chicago *Inter-Ocean,* a staunchly Republican organ, and Watterson's warmest friend. "Its foundation was not laid in the rear room of a dive, to the tune of ribald laughter and swinish gurgling. It was begun in the small country town where he was born and reared, and where he now resides, an honored, beloved citizen. It was not made up of bums and loafers, the ragged and fagged ends of humanity, but of the best men of the grand old party, the first citizens of the State. Such men as Dillingham, Southgate, and others of that ilk, are relics of the old school of politics, the school of ruffianism, dishonesty and fraud, now happily dead and gone."

"When the roll of honor of this State is finally made up," tearfully asserted the Peoria *Budget,* "the name of Watterson will be found close to the top, with those of Lincoln, Grant and Logan."

And so on. There was no end to these dirges. So my reader, when your winding sheet is preparing, His Reverence will say his prettiest things over you, and your neighbors will repeat, and perhaps, believe them, but you are gone, and they and you are soon forgotten.

"At last my Papa is receiving his due," said Myrtle, coming into Mr. Watterson's study one evening, jubilantly waving a newspaper.

"Nonsense, my dear," he replied, smiling a little sadly. "They are singing my requiem."

"Will you tell me, Papa, why a fight like this among party leaders should affect the vote of the rank and file? Because Dick has turned against you, must the voters in the district of which he is leader, vote against your candidate, and for Dick's? Surely Dick does not exercise such despotic authority over them as to absolutely control their votes?"

"My dear, the thing will be decided in the Convention, long before the voters have a chance to express their choice."

"And will you win, Papa?"

"Who can say? I believe so, however. I do not believe in spite of appearances, that Dick is against me. He has, in my opinion, concocted a scheme to oust Southgate. In order to deceive him, he had to simulate open enmity towards me."

"But Southgate is now at his mercy," said Myrtle, shrewdly, "and he still continues hostile."

"I do not know what to make of it," said Mr. Watterson, in troubled tones. "However, I am taking no chances. I am prepared for whatever may come."

"Can you in no way account for Dick's desertion, and the hostility of his confederates?"

"They are all set against Sagamore," said Mr. Watterson, slowly, "and Sagamore is the organization's choice for Governor."

"Is Mr. Sagamore's attitude towards you quite—quite generous, Papa?"

"There is no generosity in politics, my child."

"Is he acting under your instructions?"

"No, Myrtle. Mr. Sagamore is not a man to take instructions of any man."

"Then," said Myrtle, coloring indignantly, "he is not your friend."

"Hold, Myrtle," cried her father. "Do not measure his personal friendship for me by the political attitude he assumes towards me. You must learn to distinguish between the two things, my dear. Mr. Sagamore is very ambitious; his position is a very difficult one. He must study

conditions closely, and decide according to what he thinks most advantageous to himself and his political future."

"Oh, Papa, how can you talk so calmly of such a cold-blooded proceeding?" cried Myrtle, as hot as fire. "He calls himself your friend, and in the days of your greatest power he profits by that friendship, but in a crisis, such as this, when a word from him would mean so much, he remains silent and assumes a neutral position, waiting to see which way the balance of power will swing, ere declaring himself. Oh, it is mean; it is cowardly; it is dishonorable in him!"

"My dear little girl," began Mr. Watterson.

"Pardon me, Papa, you cannot convince me otherwise. We look at matters from different points of view. I cannot rise to your lofty height, but mine is, nevertheless, the more sensible way of viewing it. Papa, tell me truly," continued the girl, taking the dear face between her hands and looking into his clear brown eyes, "tell me truly, are you not disappointed in Mr. Sagamore?"

"No, Myrtle," he replied. "He is a shrewd politician. I admire him very much."

"As a politician, Papa," said Myrtle, searchingly. "But as a man, as a friend, he does not hold the same place in your regard? You look troubled, Papa! Ah! I can understand! Now, Papa, will you, regardless of Mr. Sagamore's cold attitude toward you, and toward the regular organization—will you still give him the nomination?"

"I shall do my utmost to have him nominated, certainly. I have promised. He is a trustworthy man, his honor is incorruptible, he will serve the State well. His present uncertain attitude towards me, personally, can make no difference. He has always been outspoken against the organization."

"But he will not scruple—he has not scrupled, to accept favors at the hands of the organization which he denounces," cried Myrtle, with scorn.

"You are a severe judge, my child," said Mr. Watterson, mildly.

"It is possible, Papa, that Dick may develop strength

enough at the Convention to force you to compromise with him."

"If so, I shall compromise, my dear," replied her father, smiling.

"The condition of the compromise may be Mr. Sagamore's elimination," said shrewd little Myrtle.

"Then," said Mr. Watterson, grimly, "there will be no compromise. Either Dillingham or I will cease to be politically, if Sagamore's candidacy is made the issue."

"I do not believe that Mr. Sagamore deserves such a sacrifice on your part, Papa."

"He has my word. If nominated, he will surely be elected, for he is very strong with the rank and file. He will serve the people well in office, if only," he added, a little sadly, "if only to further his own ambition."

"Supposing, Papa, that when elected, he should turn upon you?"

"It is possible that he may, my dear."

"If you knew that he would prove so ungrateful, Papa, would you still give him this nomination?"

"Surely, Myrtle."

Here Myrtle unaccountably melted into tears, and burst into that old, childish cry.

"Oh, Papa, if I could only, only, only tell you how much I love you."

"In politics, my love, to be just, one must learn to eliminate oneself entirely. But, Myrtle, if all women judge men as harshly as you do, I think it would be well to withhold the ballot from them."

"On the contrary, Papa, that very severity of judgment is needed to purify political life," said Myrtle, nodding. "But have you been studying the subject, as you promised, Papa?"

"Very closely," replied Mr. Watterson, waving his hand toward a number of books of which she had despoiled her library for his perusal.

"God grant that we win you for our leader," said Myrtle, ardently.

The State Convention was set for the second week in July, and the result was awaited with deep anxiety by Re-

publicans throughout the country. Springfield, the capital of Illinois, was the chosen city.

The general interest awakened by the struggle for supremacy between the big bosses brought many thousand of visitors. They came from all parts of the State, and from adjoining States. Dillingham arrived two days before the opening day of the Convention; Watterson did not reach the ground until the evening before the momentous day. The greatest excitement prevailed in Springfield. The result of this Convention would decide the leadership of the Republican party in the State. Either Watterson or Dillingham would go out of the Convention a ruined man. It was generally believed that Watterson would be the man.

"Watterson's a goner," said Dillingham to the newspaper men on his arrival, which words appeared in great headlines in the morning papers all over the State. It was the prevailing opinion, but, strangely enough in view of this, Watterson's name wherever uttered evoked the wildest enthusiasm. It was on every tongue.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

It was shouted aloud in the streets, and taken up and repeated, and sent rolling along on a growing tide of popular favor. Thousands of farmers had flocked into the city, and Watterson was the farmers' idol. They gathered around his headquarters in great numbers, and waited there for hours on the chance of seeing him. They cheered when his name was mentioned. They roared lustily on catching sight of him. They pressed around him eagerly, cheering in frantic enthusiasm.

Not the farmers only. Men of all classes united in singing his praises. Delegations of visitors waited upon him in the evening, eager to do him homage. The press had done its work well. By constantly dwelling upon his virtues as leader and citizen during the past weeks and months it had crystallized a popular sentiment around him that bid fair to sweep all before it and carry him, the people's idol, into the Governor's chair.

The visitors spent much of the night in uproarious jollification. They paraded the streets with bands playing; they held meetings, and indulged in long-winded speeches

defying the opposing party and eulogizing their leader. Towards morning the town became comparatively quiet, but ere the following day was two hours old the noisy demonstrations were resumed, and the uproar centering around the Convention Hall became greater than ever.

The hall was a huge brick structure, newly painted a glaring yellow, and decorated from the ground to the roof with streamers of gay bunting. Flags floated above the roof and hung drooping from the windows. The national colors were everywhere. Within, the decorations were even more splendid. The walls were draped in red, white, and blue; from lofty pillars bunting streamed; flags waved; banners were conspicuously displayed. A platform at the upper end of the hall was one mass of flags and flowers. The rugged features of Lincoln, the stern face of Grant, and the powerful countenance of Logan looked out of a background draped in the national colors.

Outside the sun shone gloriously down out of a clear sky. A gentle breeze coming from the south tempered the heat to a pleasurable mildness. The streets were alive with people. In the wide, open space around the hall a great throng had gathered. As the morning advanced delegates began pouring in, coming at first in twos and threes, and then in greater numbers, marching, one county delegation succeeding another, each uproariously greeted by the waiting crowd. It was a scene of bustling gayety. Women and children, decked out in their prettiest colors, mingled with the men, cheering and laughing in merry abandon. Bands played, flags waved, the shouts of the multitude rose and swelled, and upon its rolling tide was borne along the name of Watterson.

They awaited his coming with intense eagerness. Notable men arrived and were cheered as they pushed their way into the hall. Leaders of national repute were recognized and hailed in passing, but always and above all they looked for one man—Watterson. They talked of him, discussing his qualities as leader, as orator, as statesman, as politician. The morning papers were full of him. They recounted at length the remarkable demonstrations of loyalty he had met with on his arrival at the State Capital, but they

continued, for the most part, in the firm conviction that he was doomed. They admitted his popularity with the masses, but declared that Dillingham and not he would rule the Convention. Dillingham, they said, was master of the situation. He held the balance of power and would surely use it to further his own ambitions. The most powerful of the organization leaders were behind him, and during the last few weeks they had one and all come out openly, expressing their dissatisfaction with existing things, and declaring a change in both policy and leadership of the organization to be imperative.

In the face of this, Mr. Watterson, the evening before had come out with a statement to the press and public, declaring that the most perfect harmony existed within the organization, speaking of that body as a whole as represented by over two hundred thousand Republican voters. This declaration had given rise to countless rumors. It was said that the leaders of the second rank had united their forces with Watterson's. His jubilant supporters declared that even if Dillingham gained the upper hand in the Convention the victory would be a hollow one. It would simply mean his elimination, and that of his allies as well.

All of which matters kept the tongues of the knowing ones wagging pretty freely.

Suddenly when the uproar was at its highest, a silence fell upon those immediately around the entrance to the hall. It spread in all directions. Something was happening or was about to happen. What could it be? People craned their necks, and sought to push forward into the line formed by a double line of blue-coats. Dillingham was approaching, Dillingham the traitor, Dillingham the usurper, Dillingham the enemy of Watterson. Word was passed from mouth to mouth. Those in the rear pressed forward, eager to get a glimpse of him. He was surrounded by his allies in the fight—Brockington—Applegate—Osborne—Spitzbub—Wilmarth—Forsyth and Summerville. They seemed to be in high good humor. Dillingham was grinning from ear to ear. His companions were laughing and talking noisily. Hisses greeted them; groans, coming from every direction;

abusive epithets and sneers of open scorn. A voice cried: "Hurrah for Watterson!"

A great uproar of applause ensued. Dillingham was observed to throw back his head and laugh. In fact, the outbreak seemed to tickle the big, portly leader from center to circumference. He still was laughing convulsively when he disappeared with his party into the Convention Hall. Almost with his disappearance a cry beginning far down the line came swelling in clamorous acclaim running the length of the enthusiastic throng and culminating in a grand outburst of cheering around the hall. It announced the approach of the great man. Bands struck up more lively tunes, but the music was drowned out by the uproar. The crowd pressed forward with such impetuosity that the double line of officers wavered and almost gave way.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

Dillingham came rushing out, followed by his friends and allies. Pausing in the door he gazed in the direction of the greatest cheering with intense eagerness.

"There he is," he cried, excitedly.

There he was sure enough, the center of a frantic mob of madmen. His ruddy face was wreathed in smiles. He was advancing briskly, so briskly that Bloomfield and the other Clarence County delegates could scarce keep abreast of him.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

The cry swelled louder as he approached the hall. The big man came on with redoubled speed. It was a trying situation for any man and might easily have become ridiculous; but Watterson did not strut nor pose nor puff out his cheeks, nor frown majestically. He smiled broadly; he laughed and shook his head, talking aside with Bloomfield. It was too droll that this demonstration which of right belonged to Sagamore should be tendered him!

Dillingham still stood in the entrance when Watterson came up. His great red face absolutely beamed with affection at sight of his old friend. He started forward with both arms outstretched when Brockington plucked him by the sleeve. Dick paused irresolutely. The two big leaders regarded each other for a moment. Mr. Watterson's glance

was inquiring; he bowed gravely. Dick ducked his head in an awkward, shamefaced way and turning abruptly he hurried into the hall. Mr. Watterson followed, hat in hand, wiping the perspiration from his face.

The tumult without somewhat abated with the disappearance of the great man; but the cheering was taken up by the spectators within. Some one on the platform brought a gavel down with force and decision. The delegates flocked to their places. Mr. Watterson took the seat assigned him with his delegation. Friends pressed around him eager for a word, a look, a smile of recognition. He talked with those around about him; greeted old friends from the rural districts and received and answered scores of messages. When silence was in a measure restored, the business of the day began.

It would be both useless and tedious to recount in detail the doings of the first two days. It was the usual routine work. David Johnson, a backwoods delegate, loyal to Watterson, was made chairman of the temporary organization. He delivered a short, crisp address, fiery and brusquely to the point, exhorting all conflicting parties to forget their differences for the time being, in order that they might work together in harmony and in the interest of the party and the State. Committees on permanent organizations, credentials, resolutions and platform were then named, whereupon the Convention adjourned. Convening again on the following day at noon, a permanent organization was effected, Watterson gaining control, though not without a considerable show of opposition on the part of Dillingham's cohorts. Mr. Boswell of Bloomington was made Chairman, a friend of Watterson, a lawyer of note in his home town, and a rising man in the politics of the State. The various committees made their reports. There were no contests. Everything moved along swimmingly.

Chairman Boswell delivered an address, lasting thirty minutes, in which he made an eloquent plea for harmony. He was heartily cheered. He was followed by other speakers, who touched in passing upon State and National issues, but in the main their speeches were, like the Chairman's, pleas for peace and amity. The speaking occupied

fully three hours. It was late in the evening when the platform was taken up. Its planks were all prepared beforehand and considered and reviewed from every possible point of view. Some debate followed and a little speechifying of a purely perfunctory character.

The issues were precisely defined. It denounced at some length the Democratic administration, both State and National, citing various errors of extravagance and mismanagement. It pointed out the necessity for a change, promised economy in administering the affairs of the State and pledged the Party to reform all along the line. It extolled the Republican Party to the skies, pointing with pride to its record in the past. It endorsed the National platform as a whole and whereased and pledged itself through many pages. This platform was read aloud and adopted amid demonstrations of vociferous applause, when the Convention adjourned until the morrow at ten o'clock. All that remained was to nominate candidates for the various offices.

The harmony that had characterized the first two days' proceedings created universal wonder. Things had run as smoothly as if there had never been any conflicting factions within the Party. Watterson had conducted the proceedings as usual, as shown by the speed with which the preliminaries had been rushed through. Dillingham had had no word to say; none of the leaders had interfered with the Watterson programme. Delegates belonging to the hostile faction had delivered addresses, all chiming charmingly in with the sentiments of the faithful. It was most remarkable! What had happened to boisterous Dick? Had the very sight of his former friend and chief paralyzed his faculties? That was the general question. To the assembled newspaper men he had but one word to say—"Wait." It was taken as an indication that he was reserving himself for the morrow when the nominations were in order. Later in the evening when approached by Farraday, the *Courier* correspondent, he said with emphasis: "You may say as far as Watterson's slate is concerned, that it won't go through; Sagamore won't get the nomination. That is all that I have to say."

"The slate stands," said Watterson, mildly. "Sagamore is the Convention's choice."

And so matters rested for the night. The crowd was jubilant, believing, perhaps, that Dillingham was afraid to act in the face of their lively demonstrations. The night passed quietly. The visiting thousands, exhausted by their exertions, slept wherever possible. Watterson was exceedingly active, however. His headquarters bustled with life until the wee small hours of the morning. He held a conference at two A. M., and at its conclusion the statement he gave out to the newspapers was substantially the same as in the morning. Sagamore and Martindale would be the candidates for the two principal State offices, and the rest of the slate was finally adjusted during the night to the satisfaction of all parties faithful to the organization.

In the morning the parading outside was resumed, the shouting, the playing, the huzzahing. Still the name of Watterson was in every mouth, only there was now an added note of triumph given to the cheering sound. Their pride in him was very great. He dominated the Convention. He had but to show himself to provoke the most frantic outbursts of cheering. He continued in high good-humor through it all. He laughed at the general enthusiasm and excitement. He would by no means allow that all this adulation was meant for him personally, but persisted in declaring that the people were honoring the Party in him, having as yet no other man upon whom to focus their attentions.

"Wait until Sagamore is nominated," he said.

"But they don't want Sagamore, Scott," said Bloomfield, "they want you."

So said everybody, urging him to accept.

"Nonsense," was Mr. Watterson's invariable reply. "We'll nominate Sagamore."

Sagamore came down with a party of enthusiastic friends on the morning of the second day and called upon Watterson at the latter's headquarters. The two men greeted each other cordially and later in the day Sagamore, to the newspaper men assembled, for the first time, made plain his position in the fight.

It would seem that he had always been with Watterson, but that he had refrained hitherto from speaking for reasons which he did not feel called upon to mention. He hoped sincerely that harmony would prevail to the end in the Convention, and that a reconciliation would be effected between the two big leaders. Dillingham was invaluable to the Party. The Party could ill afford to lose Dillingham. It could not spare Brockington, nor Applegate, nor Spitzbub, nor in fact any of the warring leaders. They were all valuable to the Party. Difficulties such as this would arise, but they served a useful end after all. He hoped sincerely that all would run smoothly and that the Convention which was expected to tear the Party asunder would really cement its varying elements into a powerful whole and thus lead on to the victory of the people. There was much more to the purpose. An exceedingly able and masterly exposition, showing how a shrewd, self-seeking politician can shroud his true sentiments in mystery, as Farraday said in the Chicago *Courier*.

The third day of the Convention. Imagine a rather rudely finished hall, constructed after the manner of a theatre, with auditorium, balcony, stage and orchestra. In the auditorium the delegates are crowded; the balconies are thronged with spectators, men and women, old and young, rustic and dandy, farmer and business man. Upon the stage, a narrow platform, is the Chairman and other important dignitaries, facing the auditorium. Above the stage the musicians are stationed; immediately in front are the newspaper men. The national colors are everywhere. Portraits of leaders, alive and dead, look out of bowers of drapery. It is a sight to quicken the imagination. Above all is gayety and animation; below all is bustling activity. The delegates are gathered in knots of twos and threes, and in groups of a score. They talk and laugh, some rush hither and thither in quite a frantic manner. A murmur of many voices produces a hum of great volume. The music plays softly.

Suddenly the Chairman's gavel descends, and a moment of silence ensues. Again the gavel descends and the delegates flock to their places; the spectators settle in their seats

amid a prodigious rustling; the reporters become attentive; the music ceases. Then silence.

Looking closely down into the auditorium one can distinguish many of that body's leading spirits. There is Watterson, towering head and shoulders above those around him. His is a handsome head. The thick curly mane forms a perfect bower above it. The short rippling beard still retains its native brown, though the frosts of time have alighted upon the locks, coloring them a pleasant iron gray with here and there a glint of auburn between. The massive brow, the great brown eyes and the short, thick, well-formed nose, are well-proportioned to the man's gigantic stature. The ruddy glow upon his cheeks, the moist clearness of his eye, his steadiness of hand and majestic poise bear witness at once to perfect health and native dignity of soul.

Behind him and to the left across the aisle sits Dillingham, the lower half of whose face is so much broader than the upper half, that his head at first glance has a queer look of topsy-turviness. It is a coarse, but not an evil face. You cannot help liking it. There is a genial humor about the heavy-lidded eyes that is irresistible. The blunt edges of his thick black moustache tend upward in a perpetual grin. His thick, short-cut black hair is mottled with grey. He is gaudily dressed as usual. A great diamond sparkles in his white shirt-front. His exceeding redness of countenance seems to be the result of constant rubbing and scouring. He absolutely glows with cleanliness.

Then there is Southgate, no longer a leading spirit, to be sure, but still an interesting one. He is as portly, as florid and as stiffly starched as of yore. The outward man is the same as it was in his palmiest days. But his eyes have no longer the bold, challenging look given by conscious power. His glance is quick, furtive, suspicious. He distrusts everyone, suspects everyone; is nobody's friend. He is an object at once of curiosity and contempt to those around him. He stands alone; he is old; he has lost his grip; his old-time friends have abandoned him.

Sagamore is not present in the body, nor is Martindale, nor Winthrop. There are Brockington, Applegate, Spitzbub, Summerville and other leaders, delegates from their

various counties. There are many rising men in that assembly, who some day will be among the leaders of the Nation.

But hush! Chairman Boswell has begun his opening address. An able and eloquent review of the leading issues of the day, a masterly arraignment of the opposing party, a forceful exposition of their duty to choose men tried and true to carry their standard to victory. Other addresses follow; same theme, same thrilling eloquence; same hearty applause. Then:

"Nominations are in order, Gentlemen!"

The great hall becomes hushed. The Clerk begins the roll-call of counties in alphabetical order. One, two, three counties pass, one of them strangely enough belonging to the Dillingham faction. Outside there is cheering. The name of "Watterson! Watterson!" rises clear above the roar. Within all is still.

"County Clarence."

Mr. Bloomfield, Mr. Watterson's law partner, and leader of the Clarence County Delegation, steps forward and faces the assembled delegates. He begins his address with the ease and grace of a practiced orator. His voice, at first low, gathers strength and volume as he proceeds. The hall is hushed.

Mr. Bloomfield joined the Chairman in the fervent hope that harmony would prevail to the end in that Convention. (Applause.) He pointed out the necessity of showing the enemy a united front. (Warm Applause.) He regretted exceedingly the recent disturbance, fulminated chiefly, he believed, by disgruntled leaders, who as on a previous occasion, showed themselves eager to wreck the party they could not rule. (Dark glances in Southgate's direction.) He did not believe that any real difference existed, was sure that any slight misunderstanding might be agreeably adjusted. The history of the past day or two proved that they were all of one mind in the essentials of party rulings and party issues. (Applause.) The differences then, if differences there were, must lie in the choice of candidates. He did not see why they could not unite on a man fit to be the Party's standard bearer. Each delegation could name its choice of candidates, and the

one most in favor would, according to immemorial custom, receive the nomination.

He then launched out into glowing eulogy of the National Party leaders. He dwelt at length upon the momentous issues of the campaign as expressed in the National Party platform. Coming down to local affairs, he gradually came to the point for which they all were waiting.

"In a time such as this," said Mr. Bloomfield, in part, "when momentous questions are at issue, it behooves us as good citizens, true patriots, and loyal Republicans, to nominate a man for Governor of this great State who in himself unites not only the qualities of a great leader, but who also possesses all the qualifications for the making of a good, a great, a wise ruler. I have in mind a man who is in every way admirably fitted for this high office; a man who in many a fight has proved himself a born leader; whose record is as an open book, whose services in the legislature and in Congress have reflected honor upon himself and upon the State, a man of the people, and who will, if elected to this great office, govern by and through the people. His honor and loyalty and patriotism have never been called into question. His strength and popularity with the rank and file of the party is greater than any other man's in this State. Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen of the Convention, I have the honor of proposing the name of John Sagamore of Jacksonville, as candidate for Governor of this State."

A storm of applause greeted the nomination. The Watterson delegates cheered; the crowd in the galleries roared lustily; the waiting throngs without joined in the uproar. For three or four minutes the cheering continued, but through it all the Dillingham crowd sat mute and motionless. Dillingham, their leader, was scowling ferociously, as he looked at the cheering throng. The Chairman pounded for silence. Quiet was restored after a while, and the Clerk continued with the roll-call of counties. One man, then another, rose in his place and in behalf of his delegations seconded the nomination of John Sagamore.

"Cook County."

Mr. Blenheim, Dillingham's right-hand man, rose up amid a breathless silence and went forward. He was a tall

man, with a very handsome head, blonde and fat, and hearty-looking—a typical German. His bearing was assured, his voice pleasant. Mr. Watterson watched him closely. The eyes of all were bent eagerly upon him, but the glance of none in that assembly was as eager as Dillingham's. Dick fidgeted in his seat, he stamped, jumped up and down, emitting little chuckles. He nodded eagerly to Blenheim, and waved his hand as if to urge him on.

Mr. Blenheim's address was much like that of Mr. Bloomfield and was received with equal applause. His plea for peace and unity was a repetition of Bloomfield's prayer for harmony, only differently worded. He, too, launched out in an eloquent exposition of national issues; he eulogized National Party leaders, and fiercely arraigned the administration of the opposing party.

"My predecessor on this platform," continued Mr. Blenheim, "has enumerated the qualities of mind and heart which we, the proud citizens of this grand old State, require in a man who aspires to become its first citizen. The portrait he has drawn is a very attractive one—a noble picture truly. Far be it from me to detract in the slightest degree from the character of the honorable gentleman whom he has named, but my friends, there is in all the length and breadth of this State but one man who can and does fill all the requirements named. But one. Thirty-five years ago at the outbreak of the great war, this man, then young and lusty, volunteered his services to his State and Country. They were accepted. He went to the front and throughout that awful strife he performed his duty honorably as a soldier should. When peace was restored, he returned home prepared to devote himself fully and freely to the service of the State which is proud to call him son. Through thirty years, without reward or hope of reward, he has served her faithfully. For thirty years he has been the principal figure in her politics. He has worked ardently to promote her material interests and to advance her political prestige. He has served the people well; he has served the Party nobly and he deserves well at the hands of the Party and the people. To him is due the Party's glory in the West; to him is owing its unexampled successes. He has made the Republican Party

loved, respected, honored. Through all his thirty years of devoted service his character has remained unsullied. In his personality he combines not only all the elements that go to make greatness, but also all that is good and grand and noble in nature. He stands alone, a colossal figure, a soldier, a patriot, a statesman, a MAN! He has never yet been honored by his Party and I propose to honor him now. Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention, I have the honor on behalf of the Cook County delegation, to nominate for Governor of Illinois—Winfield Scott Watterson."

A moment of silence, deep, breathless, overwhelming silence, followed. Then the very building seemed to rock on its foundations with the roar that went up. Again and again that roar went up in deafening acclaim. It was echoed without a hundredfold.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

The wildest scenes of excitement ensued. The nine hundred odd delegates rose as one man, and as one man hurled themselves upon the towering figure of Watterson. They fought like madmen to get at him. They overturned chairs and benches in the struggle; they danced in each other's arms; they played leap frog in the aisles; they committed a thousand absurdities. They howled and shrieked, and stamped and whistled like schoolboys in a frolic. And always above the confusion rose the name of Watterson.

Watterson stood utterly astounded, the center of a host of struggling madmen. Dillingham had his arm around him. Big tears were rolling down Dick's fat cheeks. All his old leaders were there, his former friends and allies.

"Scott, Scott!" gasped Dillingham over and over again. "Scott! Scott!"

He could say no more. He pumped Scott's arms up and down, up and down with the most frantic enthusiasm, emitting little laughing ejaculations of ecstasy.

"What does this mean, Dick?" asked Mr. Watterson.

"It means that we're bound to make you Governor of Illinois," bellowed Dick, dancing up and down. "Do you hear 'em, Scott? Oh, do you hear that glorious roar? What name are they yellin'? Yours, Scott, yours! Who done this? Why I did, Scott, I did. That was my little game.

I made a door-mat of myself, so that they might see what you really are. They've been usin' me for a football, but all the time they were findin' you out. God Almighty, I'm as happy as the devil!"

"But Sagamore, Dick—"

"Damn Sagamore," yelled Dick. "Watterson! Watterson!"

For fully a half hour the uproar continued. Nor could the Chairman by any amount of pounding bring order out of the chaos. Several backwoods delegates started in to wreck the place by way of testifying their enthusiasm and the Sergeant-at-Arms had actually to interpose his authority to save the chairs and windows from destruction.

"It won't do, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, shaking his head very gravely. "It won't do at all."

"It's got to do. Look up there," said Dick, pointing to the galleries. Mr. Watterson followed his finger and encountered a thousand pairs of eyes, a thousand fluttering handkerchiefs and waving hands and swinging hats.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

"Do you hear 'em?" cried Dick. "You can't do a thing, Scott. I knowed I'd have to force it on you and that's why I came prepared."

Cries of "Speech, Speech" began to be distinguished above the uproar, and the clamor soon became unanimous and imperious. Mr. Watterson still stood surrounded by his fellow delegates, who were showering their congratulations on their idol. The big man looked exceedingly thoughtful, not to say perplexed. Presently he turned and held a whispered conference with Bloomfield. The Chairman, at a nod from him, brought his gavel into quick and forceful play. The cries ceased and the delegates quickly resumed their places. But long ere quiet had been restored Bloomfield had risen and had made a motion that the Convention adjourn until the afternoon.

Dillingham bounded up, roaring "No! No!" And "No! No! No!" was roared forth from a thousand throats. But all too late. The motion was seconded by another of Watterson's delegates and Chairman Boswell at a nod from Watter-

son, declared the Convention adjourned until five o'clock in the evening.

Dillingham was furious but helpless; his natural good-humor soon asserted itself, however, and linking his arms with Watterson's, the two big leaders walked out of the Convention Hall arm in arm. The other delegates followed cheering.

But one man in all that vast assembly remained behind forgotten and forsaken. Poor Southgate, betrayed by Dillingham, kept his seat until the Hall was entirely empty; then he too arose and crept after the others.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN WHICH JOHN SAGAMORE IS NOMINATED.

The two big leaders walked arm in arm out of the Convention Hall, and were received by a howling mob of madmen without. Word had gone forth that he, their idol, was the chosen of the Convention, and that word had stimulated the ardor of his worshippers into a frenzy of enthusiastic adulation.

"Watterson! Watterson!"

Ten thousand voices joined in the cry. The uproar was deafening. Mr. Watterson looked out over the crowd in a kind of wonder. They pressed around him tumultuously. The great man's guard of honor, augmented by a score of volunteers, gathered closely around him, and walking slowly, cheered every step of the way, they escorted him and his Party in safety to Dillingham's headquarters. Dillingham was jubilant.

"Do you hear 'em, Scott?" he cried, "Oh, do you hear that gentle roar? You can't get out of it, Scott. Your hands are tied."

Mr. Watterson no longer smiled, but looked exceedingly thoughtful. What had been a droll affair in the morning had now become a serious possibility. He understood it all now. Dillingham had never been his enemy, but on the contrary had conspired with the others to force this honor upon him. Dick's threatening attitude had brought the attention of the entire State press to bear upon him and his career; it had focussed the public eye upon him, as nothing else could have done. The adulation of the press through the weeks had served to crystallize the popular regard for him into a frenzied fervor. And this was the result. Oh, he understood it all now!

"Dick, Dick," he said with deep emotion. "Why did you do this this thing?"

"To make you Governor of Illinois, Scott," laughed Dick.

"It won't do, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, shaking his head slowly, "it never will do. The nomination was promised to Sagamore."

"To hell with Sagamore," said Dick hotly.

Dick had, as was usual with him, established himself above a saloon. Mr. Watterson made a grimace of repugnance as they neared the place.

"Why do you always fix your headquarters in a barroom, Dick?" he said, frowning.

"Upon my word, you're a woman, Scott," said Dick, grinning. "That's just the kind of a face the wife makes when she comes to my place in the City."

He had several commodious rooms above stairs, and there Mr. Watterson found all of Dick's confederates awaiting him. Senator Nightingale, too, was there and several other important men. They pressed around him laughingly and poured out their congratulations.

"It will soon be Governor Watterson, I hope," said Senator Nightingale.

Mr. Watterson slowly shook his head, but said nothing then. An hour later, however, when they had eaten luncheon, and the leaders, with some half dozen of the more important Party men, were gathered in grave conference, he made a distinct and emphatic declaration of his purpose. He would under no consideration accept the nomination, and he asked them as friends to do their utmost to quell the tumult centering around him.

"The nomination was promised to Sagamore," he said, "and we must remain true to our promise."

"But the people want you, Scott," said Brockington.

"They will respect my wishes, Ben."

"You can't mean to decline, Scott," gasped Dillingham, who had listened in a kind of stupor as his chief declared his determination to reject the proposed honor.

"Dick, I prize your friendship highly and I am deeply grateful, believe me, for what in your mistaken zeal you tried to do for me, but in this you must let me use my own judgment. I do not desire this nomination; if you persist in trying to force it on me I will rise in the Convention and decline it."

"But, why? why? why?"

"There are many reasons why, but one is sufficient. The nomination belongs to John Sagamore."

"We won't have Sagamore," said Dillingham, angrily.

"Anyone but Sagamore," said Brockington, and the others concurred with an emphatic murmur.

"Oh, it's a shame," cried Dick. "Me posin' as an awful example here for months, only to give Sagamore the nomination! It's an infernal shame, Scott, that's what it is."

Mr. Watterson lay back in his chair and roared and rumbled with laughter. Dick's disgust and indignation were quite irresistible.

"Dick, Dick, you should have known me better," he said as soon as he could speak. "Come, boys, let Sagamore have it."

"Scott," said Dick, slowly, "if I can prove to you that Sagamore was ready and willin' to throw you over and join me in our late fight, will you give him up?"

"No, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, mildly. "John had a right to choose his own course. You looked very strong and one can hardly blame a man for wishing to join the stronger party."

"You can't mean that, Scott," cried Dick, staring. "I tell you he'd ha' throwed you over in a minute if he thought you was goin' under. Lookee here, Scott, I had a double purpose in this thing—a treble purpose, I may say. First, I wanted to undermine Southgate; second, I wanted to carry you into the Governor's chair, and third, I wanted to find out who was and who wasn't to be trusted, so that we could nip any future Southgates in the bud. I went around and without givin' the snap away, I made proposals to the leading men an' you'll be surprised, Scott, when you look over this list of names and learn some of the men who were dead willin' to throw you over and join hands with me or anybody against the organization. Look, Scott, Sagamore's name heads th' list."

Mr. Watterson took the paper which Dillingham held out to him.

"What shall I do with this, Dick?" he said.

"I don't care. Do what you like."

The big man held the paper for a while folded as it was handed to him, then slowly tore it up and scattered the pieces from the window. There was a general gasp at this, and some faces even in that room became clearer and ruddier with the disappearance of that paper.

"What did you want to do that for?" cried Dick, in great consternation.

"I don't want to know these men, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, shaking his great head. "I do not blame them for turning from me to you. I looked weak, and you appeared to be strong. It is politics, Dick."

"You always was a funny feller, Scott," said Dillingham. "But one thing you've got to do. You've got to drop Sagamore. I tell you he ain't to be trusted. Ask Applegate."

"He ain't, Scott," said Applegate. "I went to him and in Dick's name promised him the nomination if he would join us and come out openly against you. He wouldn't come out against you; he was far too shrewd to compromise himself in that way, but when he found out how many districts we held, and saw that we were sure to have the upper hand of you in the Convention, he agreed to side in with us, and promised at the last moment to throw all the weight of his influence on Dick's side, believing in that way he could silence the outcry that would be sure to be raised against us by both press and public with your downfall."

"You see, Scott," cried Dick eagerly. "You will drop him now, won't you?"

"No, Dick. Granting that Sagamore was in earnest, which I do not believe, his proposed betrayal of me personally has nothing to do with it. He will not betray the Party nor the people. He is a good man; he will make a good Governor. His rule will reflect honor upon the party and upon the State. His services in the past deserve this recognition. He's the strongest man I know of with the rank and file and deservedly the most popular."

"How about yourself, Scott?"

"I am out of the running, Ben."

"Scott," cried Dillingham in despair, "don't you owe me somethin'?"

"I do, Dick, I do," replied the big man, stretching out his hand and grasping Dick's warmly. "I owe you my love and friendship."

"Ah!" Tears came into Dick's eyes for his was an emotional nature. To conceal his agitation, he burst out afresh in apparent fury. "I meant for you to go to the Senate in Nightingale's place. I meant to have you run for Governor with Blenheim, so that Blenheim could step into your shoes when Nightingale retired. I kin git fifty thousand dollars for the campaign fund by giving Blenheim second place. And we need the money, Scott. Come now let's compromise this thing. If you'll go on the ticket, we kin git any amount of money, and we're sure to win. Accept this nomination and we'll give Sagamore second place. It'll be some satisfaction anyhow to force him to creep in on your name and popularity."

"There you are, Scott," cried Brockington. "That'll be satisfactory all around. You'll go to the Senate as proposed. Sagamore'll be Governor and the crowd'll be satisfied."

"You an' Sagamore would sweep the State, Scott," declared Applegate.

"Sagamore is not the man to put up with that kind of an arrangement," said Mr. Watterson.

"Then he'll git out," cried Dillingham, savagely. "I'll tell you for good and all, Scott, we will not agree to Sagamore."

Mr. Watterson looked troubled and anxious. There was not a man in the room friendly to his friend. He had at different times antagonized them all in what they were pleased to call his "grand stand play" in the State Legislature.

"Is it to be a fight in earnest?" he said slowly.

Dick rose and thrusting his thumbs into his vest pockets took a turn or two through the room.

"Scott," he said, pausing before his friend. "We can't fight you, and I might as well own up at once. I ain't got that much power," snapping his fingers, "with the farmer delegates. If you say Sagamore, they'll stampede for Sagamore. If you put up a yaller dog, they'd nominate him.

That's the long and short of it. But, Scott, I ask you as a friend to drop Sagamore. As a friend, Scott."

"I do not believe, Dick," replied Mr. Watterson, after a few moments of silence, "that you are as powerless in the Convention as you say, and I am very sure that the delegates are not as subservient to any one man as you would have me believe. Let us arrange another compromise. Believe me, I do not want to set my individual will against the will of all, nor would I presume to do so if you could show any good cause for rejecting a man at once so strong with the rank and file of the Party and so worthy and deserving and capable as Sagamore is. You are against him, all of you, because of the stand he took against certain legislative measures, in which you were perhaps interested. But consider, it is the very work he did, while in the Legislature that has won him the popularity he enjoys today with the mass of the voters. Dick, we must put up a good man. We must win. We owe it to the Party nationally. And incidentally our political existence depends upon the outcome of this campaign. For if we are defeated this fall, and through our own folly, the organization will be done for. Now, I am loath to antagonize you all, nor do I want to let Sagamore go, so supposing we go into the Convention in the good, old fashioned way, allowing each County Delegation to name its choice—counting me out, remember—and may the best man win."

"No good," growled Dick, "it all comes to the same thing. As soon as those crazy farmers find out that you're out of the running they'll nominate your man with a rush."

"I'll concede second place to Blenheim, Dick. Will that satisfy you? And another thing," he added, more slowly, "I'll withdraw my hand from Sagamore when he is elected Governor."

"When he is in a position to fight us?" said Dick, with scorn.

"Surely, Dick, I cannot leave him helpless, when you are all against him. You can watch him. You will soon be State leader, Dick, I hope, for I need hardly say that if I am elected to the Senate, I shall resign my leadership of the organization. The leaders have learned that they can

trust you, and I believe that you will be elected to succeed me."

The way the others crowded around Dick at this announcement left little room for doubt, on that score. Dick stood grinning, from ear to ear, receiving their congratulations.

"Let it be Sagamore then," he said, "if I am placed where I kin watch him and guard agains' him, why all right, let it be Sagamore."

"And Martindale, Dick," said Mr. Watterson, persuasively.

"No, No, Blenheim gits second place."

So it was settled.

"Now, I wonder if there are any newspaper men about?" said Mr. Watterson, smiling, in high, good humor.

There were. Dillingham sent word to them, and they came up, a dozen or more, with Farraday, in the van. He met Dillingham's triumphant grin with an easy smile.

"Explain, Dick."

Dick explained, chuckling a good deal at the neat way in which he had pulled the wool over the eyes of the press representatives. There was, it seemed, no conflict in the organization. It was united within and impregnable without, and Watterson was its leader now as he had always been.

"John Sagamore will be nominated," said Mr. Dillingham in conclusion. "It is rather a pity we can't postpone business until tomorrow, so that my statement would be generally seen."

"I'll engage to have my paper on the street in an hour," said a reporter for a Springfield newspaper.

"Good boy."

The reporters had barely gone when Sagamore arrived with various of his friends and supporters.

"I've heard all about it, Scott," he said shaking hands cordially. "I congratulate you."

"On what, John?"

"On your nomination."

"I've declined the nomination."

Mr. Sagamore stared, changing color a number of times.

"You don't mean it," he said.

"You had my promise, John," said Mr. Watterson, in a tone of reproach.

"You must recall your declination, Scott," cried Sagamore energetically. "Do not let your promise to me stand in the way. I absolve you from it here and now. The people want you, Scott. The leaders want you. You must take it."

"No," said Mr. Watterson, coldly. "I have declined, and my word stands. If you do not desire the nomination —but you do?"

"I withdraw only in your favor," said Sagamore, flushing.

"Then you shall be nominated. Ask Dick."

"Ask Dick nothing," said Dillingham, sulkily, "I've given in to you, but I told you once, and I'll tell you right before him now, that Sagamore ain't no true man."

He looked hard at Sagamore, saying this. Sagamore met his glance, smiling disdainfully.

"Dick is angry, Scott, because I practiced a little deception on him. Rather unreasonable in him, don't you think, considering the joke he was playing on the whole State. He sent Applegate to me with proposals, and in order to gain some knowledge of his plans so that I could thwart them, I pretended to side in with him."

"*You* pretended," said Dick rudely. "It wasn't much of a pretense, eh, Applegate?"

"I should say not," cried the gentleman appealed to.

"Scott, do you believe that I thought of betraying you," said Sagamore, drawing himself up with a movement full of manly dignity. "If so, I shall withdraw my name as candidate for this nomination. Do you believe me capable of deception, Scott?"

"So far from it, John," said Scott, holding out his hand, "that I find it hard to credit your purpose of deceiving Dick for my benefit."

"It was for your benefit, Scott," said Sagamore coloring, "that is my only excuse."

"Come, Dick, shake hands with John," cried Mr. Watterson beaming. "You see he is a true man. Be friends."

"Well," said Dick, holding out his hand rather sulkily however, "I don't mind. Politics is politics, after all, and men in politics are politicians."

They shook hands upon this sentiment, and the other leaders followed Dick's example with more or less grace and heartiness.

"But where is Southgate?" asked Mr. Watterson suddenly.

"Who, the poodle?" laughed Dick.

"He is sitting below," said Sagamore, smiling. "I saw him in one of the small rooms at the foot of the stairs."

"Shall I whistle for him?" laughed Dick.

"By no means," said Mr. Watterson quickly.

He left the room and softly went down the wide stairway. At a small round table in a little room off the hall sat Southgate with his elbows resting upon the table, and his head lowered in his hands. Mr. Watterson approached him softly from behind, and placed his large white hand upon the stupefied wretch's shoulders. Southgate looked up listlessly, then started up with a cry of mingled astonishment and horror. The man whom he had so long antagonized, whom he had fought so bitterly, whom he had denounced, maligned, abused, outraged, stood before him, but lo! there was no anger in his eyes, no triumph in his smile. Nothing but good will and warm cordiality.

"I'm glad to see you, Southgate," said the big man, beaming. "Dillingham has told me of the valuable services you rendered in bringing about our present happy reunion. You have acted very generously, Southgate, and I want to thank you."

Southgate stood staring up at him after he had ceased speaking, in a dazed wonder. He could not realize this stupendous thing that was happening to him. A moment ago he had stood alone, an outcast, deserted by great and small, and now here stood Watterson, the greatest of all, Watterson, his implacable enemy, holding out his hand and speaking gratefully of services rendered. He gasped once or

twice, and stammered out some incoherent words, then sank down upon the table, and bowed his head in his hands.

"Come, Ed, don't take it so," said the big man, closing the door softly, and sitting down beside his old-time enemy.

"Oh Scott, Scott," Southgate gasped, pressing Mr. Watterson's hand to his breast. "So help me God, I'd die for you! I always loved you, so help me God I did. They made me do it—talked me into it, I mean."

"I know, I know, Ed. I've looked into it. Don't think of it any more. We'll be good friends and allies for the future. Come upstairs now—the other leaders are there, and your place is among them."

Southgate composed himself with great difficulty, but when he had once come to realize the thing fully, he promptly fell into his old ways. Dillingham and his companions were greatly surprised to see their chief come in arm in arm with Southgate. The little man's chest was puffed out prodigiously. He strutted and swelled before their very eyes. He approached Dick with lordly condescension.

"Glad to see you, Dillingham," he said pompously. "Ah, Brockington, old boy! Good afternoon, Applegate. Sagamore, you're looking well. I'm delighted to see you."

Dillingham yelled with laughter, but he shook the pompous little fellow's hand, and the others followed his example with more or less grace. Southgate, having come into his own again, beamed with radiant happiness. But he remained close to Watterson.

"You will give him his district, Dick?" said Mr. Watterson in a low voice.

"No, he's lost his grip. Let Keller keep it."

"Man, man, it will kill him."

"Let it. He came very near killing us."

"Dick—"

"Oh, all right. Damn it, you're bound to have your way."

Mr. Watterson laughed, and patted Dick on the shoulder.

"Another thing, Dick," said the big chief softly. "Summerville must go."

"What! You come down on a man like Summerville after taking Southgate back and overlooking Sagamore's treachery? For you can't doubt that Sagamore would ha' chucked you overboard to save himself?"

"Southgate was weak, and Sagamore cautious. That is all. But Summerville has been the principal disturber. His ambition to go to Congress has turned his head. He it was who fomented all this trouble. He used Southgate as a cat's-paw, playing him against the organization. You know that? Summerville must go."

"But, Scott," said Dillingham, all aghast. "He's strong as hell—the only one of all worth conciliating. With the campaign coming on and election, we can't afford—"

"My dear Dick," interrupted Mr. Watterson, mildly. "The thing must be done smoothly. Give Bentley a hint that you're behind him. Tell Morse to raise the hue and cry after him, challenging his right to the leadership on account of his desertion. The matter will come up before the executive committee for decision. I'll order a district election, and let it be understood among the rank and file that we favor Bentley, and Summerville will never know what hurt him. Put the wheels in action right after the Convention. I rely upon you. The man offends the sight of me. To gratify an ambition laudable enough, he turned double traitor, betraying us and his allies. He's got to go."

"Shake, Scott," said Dick, grinning. "I'd begun to think you was gittin' softenin' of the brain, but I see you're all there yet."

Cries of "Watterson! Watterson!" were still in the air, but they were not so insistent now, nor vociferous. The news had spread that he had declined the nomination, and on all sides as he went forth to the concluding session of the Convention, a storm of protestations arose against such action, mingling with heart-breaking entreaties, that he would reconsider his resolution. Dillingham declared with tears in his eyes that it was a shame—worse than a shame, an absolute crime, to disappoint the faithful so.

"You're all the time talking about the will of the people, said Dick, indignantly, "and here you're going right square against it."

Mr. Watterson laughed in great good humor, but remained firm. Southgate walked proudly beside the chief, and so, three abreast, they entered the Convention Hall, amid the uproarious cheering of the throng.

The programme for the evening was cut and dried. The galleries still murmured "Watterson," but the workers below reversed their morning's decision and nominated Sagamore. It was a tame and disappointing proceeding. One county after another arose and pledged its vote to Sagamore, but without warmth or enthusiasm. The galleries repeatedly manifested their disapproval by hisses and groans, but to no avail. John Sagamore, receiving the unanimous vote of the counties of Illinois, was declared duly nominated to the highest office in the State. This declaration was warmly applauded, the delegates rising as one man to show their approval, but it did not last. The cheering was forced. Sagamore was popular enough, but he was far overshadowed by a greater than he.

The thing being done, there followed cries of "Sagamore! Sagamore!" The candidate was hastily sent for; he came in haste, and was received at the door by Mr. Watterson, who in person escorted him to the platform for the purpose of introducing him to the assembled delegates and people. Mr. Watterson looked radiant, and was observed to repeatedly press the younger man's hand.

Sagamore, with a darker color than usual in his rugged cheeks, confronted the crowd with a cool composure born of long experience. The appearance of the two men together provoked frantic cheering, the applause indeed resembling the uprising in the morning.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Watterson, turning to Sagamore with his hand resting affectionately on the candidate's shoulder, "I have the honor and pleasure of introducing to you a young man known to many of you in person, and to all by reputation, our candidate for Governor of Illinois, Mr. John Sagamore."

The words were received with a prolonged cheer. The band struck up a lively air. Mr. Sagamore bowed to the right and left, and when the uproar had ceased he addressed

the Convention in that calm tone of assurance and self-confidence for which the man was noted.

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention: Your message of confidence so generously expressed has been conveyed to me, and I am here in response to the summons. I am deeply sensible of the great honor you have conferred in nominating me as your candidate for Governor of this peerless commonwealth, an honor which in my estimation is second only to being named as a candidate for the Presidency of our common country. It is my duty to accept, and my heartfelt thanks are yours for the gracious preferment. Our State covers a vast territory; its interests are many and diverse, and the care of fostering these requires close and unremitting attention. If elected to the high office for which you have named me, my best efforts will be exerted to protect these interests and to discharge faithfully the duties devolving upon me. It will be my conscientious effort to so administer the office that every citizen will feel that I am in fact, as well as in name, Governor of the whole commonwealth, and that the interests of all are dear to me. Gentlemen, I accept your commands, and again thank you most sincerely."

This little speech, gracefully delivered, was received with every manifestation of cordial approval. But Mr. Watterson's speech, which followed, again set the hall aflame with enthusiasm. It was so strong and stirring as a whole; it expressed such warm approval of the Convention's choice, and such confidence in the result of their endeavors, that it in a great measure reconciled the crowd to the inevitable, and Sagamore, who was really strong with the populace, but held in abhorrence by the politicians, great and small, was given an ovation second only to that tendered his friend in the morning.

Then followed the selection of candidates for the minor State offices. Mr. Blenheim, the gentleman who had launched the Watterson boom in the morning, was chosen as Sagamore's running mate, being unanimously nominated Lieutenant-Governor. The office of State Treasurer was given to Mr. Messler of Galesburg, and the other vacancies were quickly filled as per previous arrangement. The Con-

vention lasted until dusk, when it broke up, and the delegates and visitors went flocking home as fast as steam could carry them.

The reconciliation between the State leaders created great satisfaction, and Watterson's undoubted supremacy was hailed by Republicans throughout the country with uncommon delight. Sagamore's nomination was on the whole satisfactory. He was popular; his past record was without a flaw; his future bright with promise. Great things were predicted of him, and these predictions he seemed to justify by his assured bearing beneath the honors showered upon him. He was overwhelmed with congratulations during the next few days, to all of which he responded with a semblance of warmth and a pleasing show of modesty that won upon all.

But to return to the morning succeeding the Convention. Mr. Sagamore accompanied his friend to the latter's home at Clarenceburg. They received the warmest greetings all along the line. Great crowds met them at the stations and cheered them on their way. Mr. Sagamore was repeatedly obliged to show himself, and he never failed to indulge his admirers, nor refused to speak when speech was demanded. At Clarenceburg again there was a vast crowd collected, waiting to welcome Mr. Watterson and his distinguished guest. They were escorted to Republican headquarters by the local marching club, where an immense audience awaited them. Mayor Billy Boyle, in great rotundity of person, and jocundity of countenance, laughed his way through a short address of welcome. Mr. Watterson, replying, gave thanks for their reception, and begged leave to introduce his distinguished friend to his fellow townsmen. Mr. Sagamore followed, and in a speech of thirty minutes' duration, managed to say so many pleasing things of Mr. Watterson, the city's pride and idol, that he quite won the hearts of those who heard him.

There followed a reception in the great parlors of the Clarenceburg Hotel, where Mr. Sagamore met the more distinguished of Mr. Watterson's townsmen, after which came a banquet, given in his honor, in which all the dignitaries of the town who happened to be of Republican per-

suasion participated. More speeches, more compliments, toasts and enthusiasm. It was very late when they got away, and tired enough they were from the day's exertions.

Aunt Sadie's embarrassment was very great upon receiving a guest so distinguished, but, save for certain outward manifestations of inward disquiet, such as an unconquerable desire to pat her hair and tuck away imaginary curls and locks of hair, she bore herself with her customary grace and dignity. Myrtle smiled very brightly when she came forward, holding out her hand in welcome, and he, as he clasped that little member, looked deep into her beautiful eyes, and then and there renewed his resolution to win this charming little woman for his own.

"Papa," said Myrtle later, when they were alone in the study, "I am deeply disappointed in you—deeply, Papa."

"Why, Myrtle?" he asked.

"Because you did not accept the nomination, sir. Don't you know that your daughter would have been very proud, oh! so proud, to have seen her dear father Governor of Illinois? Don't you know that, Papa?" she said, shaking him playfully.

"I had promised my support to Mr. Sagamore, my dear."

"Mr. Sagamore could afford to wait," said Myrtle, tossing her head. "It would have been a splendid recognition of your services to the State—your triumphant election. And you would have been elected, Papa. You have earned this honor; Mr. Sagamore has not. I am deeply disappointed; but, oh! how proud I am of my dear, dear father!"

She kissed him and tousled his hair for him, and nearly strangled him in her encircling arms.

"If Mr. Sagamore had not declared himself for you at a time when Dick's purpose was still shrouded in mystery I should have been very angry with him," continued Myrtle. "As it was, it was very late in the day for a man so highly placed to come out with a statement. Very late, indeed, and I am not sure but that he had some inkling of the true state of affairs before he spoke."

"For shame, Myrtle! Mr. Sagamore is our guest."

"I don't care," said Myrtle, shaking her head saucily. "He promised me faithfully to do his utmost to have a resolution favoring Woman Suffrage embodied in the Republican platform, and," added Myrtle, opening wide a newspaper and pointing out the offending document with indignation, "there is no such thing!"

"Aha!" cried Mr. Watterson, laughing, "that is what hurts my little daughter." He lay back in his chair and laughed for a long time.

"Tell me truly, Papa," said Myrtle. "Did Mr. Sagamore say one word to you about such a resolution?—one word, Papa?"

"Yes, Myrtle, he did. I considered it a very dangerous innovation at the present time, but told him to go ahead and sound the others. He did so, and the result was most discouraging. The thing was unreservedly condemned, my dear. John could do nothing."

Myrtle sat for a time in silence, with her hands resting listlessly in her lap and her eyes fixed pensively upon her father. Then slowly two big tears welled up into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Don't mind, my darling," said Mr. Watterson, deeply touched. "Time will make all right."

"Mr. Sagamore might have forced it in," said Myrtle, rebelliously.

"My dear little girl, do not be so unreasonable," said Mr. Watterson. "Such a thing cannot be forced against the wishes of others. Public opinion as voiced by the press is hopelessly against Woman Suffrage now, and such a resolution would have inevitably disrupted the party."

"Mr. Sagamore, I suppose, was afraid," pouted Myrtle.

"I cannot understand you, my child," said Mr. Watterson, deeply astonished at the unreasonable and rebellious spirit displayed by his usually sensible daughter.

"Never mind, Papa," cried Myrtle airily, "I know someone who, if he had been in Mr. Sagamore's place, would have done this thing for me, though certain ruin stared him in the face. Sherman would have forced it in."

"But, Myrtle—Myrtle—"

She sprang up laughing, and, throwing her arms

around his neck, she hugged him soundly and ran away, leaving him not a little perplexed and mystified.

The truth was that Myrtle had divined Mr. Sagamore's true feeling for her, and, with true feminine perversity, she was disposed to exact a sacrifice from him which she could in no way reward.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IS LARGELY DEVOTED TO MR. SAGAMORE.

The correspondence begun late in the winter between Myrtle and Mr. Sagamore was continued through the succeeding spring and summer, and if it bore fruit in nothing else, at least it served to bring about a greater degree of intimacy between the two principals than otherwise could have obtained. It also gave to each a clearer insight into the character of the other. Mr. Sagamore did not, in truth, grow very much in Myrtle's estimation, while she, on the other hand, assumed greater and purer proportions in his mind. It was the difference between the self-seeking pretender and the ardent self-sacrificing devotion of an enthusiast.

Mr. Sagamore was deeply interested in the Cause. His first letters were full of it; full of questions, that is, and exhaustive arguments and speculations, all tending to confirm a proud belief in Myrtle's mind that in him she had made a great and powerful convert and ally. The correspondence on her side confined itself strictly to the Cause. She pointed out at great length and with infinite pains the great good to be derived by her sex through the possession of the ballot; of the standing it would give to woman before the world; of the reforms it would be able to bring about, and so on. She spoke of the great good a really earnest man in a position of power could exert in its behalf and of the glory that success would bring to him. His replies, while not as warm as she could wish, nor hopeful, nor helpful, were still in the main satisfactory, because of his unceasing professions of faith in, and loyalty to, the Cause. He suggested nothing, promised nothing, did nothing, but he agreed with her contentions in a general sort of way.

When Myrtle urged him to come out openly and endorse Woman Suffrage, he pointed out that in the position he was in he was obliged to yield more or less to the wishes

of others—leading politicians—nearly all of whom were opposed to the thing. He had sounded them, he said; they were men who were in position to know the sentiments of the people. They must wait. The time was not yet ripe. He might do himself irreparable injury by a premature disclosure of his sentiments. The Cause at present was unpopular; it had not a single great organ behind it—no distinguished advocate. She knew that what he said was nothing more nor less than a bald statement of the truth, yet she condemned him for lukewarmness. She scorned his caution. He thought too much of personal aggrandizement; to attain the heights to which he ambitiously aspired, she feared that he would abandon the Cause. She would have cheerfully yielded up her fame and thankfully have sacrificed any position to which with success she might have aspired on the altar of the Cause, and she felt that he, as a true believer, should have been willing to do as much. Her letters took on a gently reproachful tone. She had hoped, she said, that in him the Cause had found a noble champion, its followers a worthy leader. She was sorry he had determined to abandon it and them. For the stand he had taken, she need hardly point out, was an utter surrender, an absolute abandonment. How could the Cause become popular unless it was forcibly brought home to the popular mind? How could it make progress if the faithful in exalted station remained silent? Where would its distinguished advocates come from if he and such as he did not come out boldly for it?

He replied in effect that he had not abandoned the Cause, but that he merely refused to immolate himself when absolutely nothing could be gained by such immolation. If, on the other hand, he remained silent, and by disguising his true sentiments, gained a position where his efforts would be of avail, he could do the Cause much good. John Sagamore, ex-Congressman, was nobody. John Sagamore, Governor of Illinois, President of the United States, would be somebody. His word would reach far and carry weight. Self-sacrifice was all very well in its way, and very beautiful, no doubt, and elevating, but impractical, and politics, he begged to state, was a field of cold, practical endeavor. His

natural acerbity of disposition shone through this letter. It was a rebuke which Myrtle felt the more keenly, because, from the standpoint of practical politics, it was all very true, and her reply was correspondingly subdued—and colder. And, though he gained a kind of ascendancy over her in this, he fell immeasurably in her regard.

Myrtle was a most unreasonable young woman. Demanding many of man's privileges, she insisted on retaining all of woman's prerogatives. She loved chivalry in men, the homage of the sterner sex was inexpressibly sweet to her. That mere man should stand uncovered in her presence; should eagerly attend upon her; should, in a word, humbly kiss the hem of her gown and permit her to queen it over him—all this was her natural heritage, being a woman. Her father's unfailing courtesy to her, the General's magnificent courtliness, Sherman's reverential homage, the respect paid to her by every gentleman of her acquaintance—all bore out her expectations in this; and Mr. Sagamore's dry, unchivalrous attitude wounded her deeply. She resented his masterful tone. She resented it strongly, and she resolved to make him feel her displeasure.

Her letters became briefer and colder, breathing, instead of friendliness, a merely fraternal regard. His letters drifted away from the subject. He came to speak more of himself, of his hopes and aims and ambitions. He was very frank and open. His ambition tended to nothing less than the very highest summits of political eminence. He was full of fire; he worked tirelessly. He made friends wherever possible. He was building up an enormous correspondence. He had political friends all over the country. His term in Congress had brought him into contact with the leading men of the nation. He kept in touch with them for purposes of his own. The Governor's chair was but a step to higher place. All this he told Myrtle, divulging his plans and elaborating upon them with an eloquence, a power, a minuteness, and candor which amazed the girl. This masterful character charmed her, filled her with admiration. She again burned with desire to gain this man's active co-operation in furthering the Cause. Her letters again became longer and friendlier, and keeping step with

his soaring ambition, she showed him how, by taking up the Cause and fighting its battles, he could gain his ends and win undying fame at one and the same time.

She pointed out that no one had ever attained true greatness save when animated by a great cause, and the Cause of Woman was sublime. She cited Washington, who liberated his country, Lincoln, who liberated the slaves. Why should not John Sagamore go down the corridors of time as the liberator of women? He answered her eloquent appeals by protestations of loyalty. He tried to draw her out to talk of herself, but she had so completely sunken her individuality into the Cause, that in her intercourse with him she had no existence outside of it. So the matter rested. She was assured of his faith and loyalty, and ardently anxious to gain his outspoken support, because she believed that a man at once so strong and cautious, so calculating and ambitious, was eminently qualified to lead the Cause to victory. The Cause needed such a man. She could wage battle for it with her pen; but she could talk only to women. Men must be reached, for with them rested the power finally to grant to woman the ballot. Mr. Sagamore could reach men; she could not. She was debarred from participating in the battle with the sterner sex by conditions as well as by a natural womanly timidity, for though she bore herself with calm composure in the face of the world, Myrtle was really very timid and shy at bottom. Her strong good sense alone enabled her to conceal this infirmity. She could lecture before an audience of women; she could argue with eloquence in her study, having the right to expect that her writings would be read by men as well as women, but to stand up before an audience of men, or even before a mixed audience of men and women—that she had never done—could never do. There were women who could do this, of course, but Myrtle did not possess that quality of courage.

It was only of late that the girl had begun to suspect Mr. Sagamore's regard for her. She was a sensible young woman, and her good sense told her that no man, least of all one so cautious as Mr. Sagamore, would lay bare his innermost thoughts to a woman unless he entertained for her a regard warmer than mere friendship. When the thought

had once flashed across her mind she could recall a thousand things to confirm her suspicion. She was at first dismayed by this discovery and disposed to be capricious. All of her further correspondence was colored by the varying emotions which the knowledge of his subjection inspired in her. She became imperious, exacting. She upbraided him for his precautionary silence; she pretended to doubt his loyalty; she called into question his faith to the Cause. He answered with protestations of good faith. He was charmed by her pretty airs of authority. He awaited only the proper moment, he said, to come out openly favoring the Cause, and as for his faith in and loyalty to the Cause, he hoped to prove them to her at some future time.

He came down with her father, stamped as the chosen of the State convention. He was now a great man in earnest. She received him graciously. He was simple and unassuming as ever, but his manner confirmed her in her belief that he loved her. His voice was very gentle when he addressed her; his eyes followed her about the room; his expression softened, his face lit up when she spoke to him. Now with the man at a distance she had treated him with that charming capriciousness which seemed ingrained in her very nature, but the man's near presence filled her with dismay. She could not reciprocate his feeling and she felt that it would be very wrong to encourage him. And yet she had taught herself to look upon this man as a kind of Moses, destined to lead her sex out of the wilderness, into the promised land of complete emancipation. So divided between the coldness which as a woman, she was bound to show to one in whom a warm, womanly graciousness would only awaken hopes, and encourage expectations which she could never gratify, and the warmth which she as an ardent devotee to the Cause, desired to show him who was to be that Cause's future leader, Myrtle's state of mind, may more easily be imagined than described. But, resolving to bear herself toward him with only such graciousness which she as her father's daughter, owed to her father's guest, and to confine her intercourse with him solely to the Cause which bound them together, Myrtle met Mr. Sagamore on the following morning with an equable smile, and

conversed with him only in so far as the laws of politeness called for.

Fortunately Mr. Sagamore's time was fully occupied during the week. He and Mr. Watterson were kept busy in arranging the details of the aggressive campaign which they proposed to inaugurate during the course of the coming week with a monster mass meeting at the Chicago Coliseum. It was not until the last evening of his stay that he found an opportunity of talking alone with the girl. Of course Myrtle could have made endless opportunities to converse at length with him, but true to her settled purpose of giving him no grounds upon which to base hopes which could never be realized, she avoided him, though it was with very great pain that she let slip many opportunities for pressing home her eager arguments for the Cause in which she hoped to enlist his powerful services. She could do much for the Cause, but she could not debase her womanhood and she felt that to encourage an earnest man to entertain thoughts of her which would inevitably cause him future sorrow and suffering would be lowering her womanhood.

"You have quite a correspondence, Miss Myrtle," said Mr. Sagamore, absolutely invading her study to speak to her.

"Yes," said Myrtle, frowning, with a pretty assumption of austerity, which far from repelling, charmed him.

"Do you not sometimes find yourself at your wits' end for material to work up in your weekly newspaper article? Surely two long columns of matter must tax your powers to the utmost. I can understand the various essays you contribute to the periodicals, for then you follow out one line of thought; but in your newspaper article you treat of such a multitudinous assortment of things."

"But all appertaining to woman's realm, and all based primarily on our Cause."

"But is it not a hard matter to furnish so much every week?"

"Not at all. I receive scores of letters every week from my readers, asking questions arising out of my arguments, or suggesting interesting points for discussion. Many crit-

icize my opinions. In answering these questions and these criticisms, and in acting upon such suggestions as appeal to me, or which affect the Cause, however remotely, I sometimes over-run my allotted space. These questions that form themselves in one person's mind naturally occur to others, and in answering one I am answering many. Then I review editorial opinions touching upon our Cause, take due notice of woman's doings over the country, and keep in constant touch with the great leaders of the Cause who are kind enough to write to me sometimes commending me for this or that. It is from these that valuable suggestions come. They keep me informed of every forward movement of our Cause, and it is my duty and pleasure to acquaint my readers with these matters, and to comment at length upon their probable result which may be far reaching."

"What would you call a forward movement?"

"If you, Mr. Sagamore," said Myrtle, coloring hotly, "were to come out with a bold statement endorsing our Cause, I would call that a step forward."

Mr. Sagamore remained silent for a moment.

"Your father will tell you how impossible that is now," he then said.

"I notice that you are very bitter against women who do not want the ballot."

"Bitter against them!" cried Myrtle, "why, goodness me, no! What have I ever said to make you think so?"

"You score the Anti-Suffragists almost every week."

"Dear me! Mr. Sagamore, there is a vast difference between a woman who does not want the ballot, and therefore does not strive for it, and one who, not wanting it, endeavors to prevent those who do from obtaining it."

"Yes, there is."

"I do feel very bitter toward these selfish women. Because they, in their fussy narrow-mindedness, cannot comprehend the incalculable benefits to be derived by women through the Suffrage, they ruffle their feathers and peck at their more enlightened sisters. You have no doubt read the fable of the dog in the manger, Mr. Sagamore. I remember as a child crying with pity for the poor hungry cattle standing helplessly by, unable, because of a selfish

little cur, to get at the food which they stood in so much need of. I was so very angry at the dog that I could not sleep thinking of it, so one night I got up out of bed and took Aunt Sadie's scissors and cut him out of the picture; then I returned to bed and slept very soundly, happy in the conviction that now the horse and the ox would eat their fill. I was very little then, Mr. Sagamore," said Myrtle, laughing, though tears stood in her eyes—"very small and foolish, but I feel now toward those women very much as I then felt toward the selfish dog."

"Do you not think, Miss Myrtle," said Mr. Sagamore, speaking very slowly, "that you could advance your Cause very much by coming out of your seclusion—if you occupied a position, I mean, that in itself will command the serious attention of everyone?"

"I—I'm afraid I do not understand you, Mr. Sagamore," said Myrtle coloring deeply.

"If your father, say, were Governor of this State," continued Mr. Sagamore, "do you not think your position upon this question would attract more widespread attention to it? That your utterances would be listened to with more respect and given more serious consideration by thinking people than they are now?"

"I do not think so, Mr. Sagamore," replied Myrtle, with composure. "My father's position at present is considered one of more importance than that of Governor, and he is generally held to be a greater man."

"Oh, is he?" said the candidate for Governor, ruefully.

Myrtle could not help laughing.

"He may not be as great a man as our next Governor," she said demurely, "but I am afraid there will be people so very perverse as to think so."

"Yes, he is greater in every possible way," said Mr. Sagamore gravely. "He does not know his own greatness. Modesty is a fine quality—in a woman. In a man it is a draw-back—in a politician a curse. Mr. Watterson is, in my opinion, the very greatest man in this country today, but of what avail is it to him?"

"Thank you, Mr. Sagamore," said Myrtle softly.

He would have pursued the supposition further, but

his natural caution intervened. He did not wish to startle her. He would wait until such time as he could come to her—laurel-crowned and victorious. He left her saying he wished to speak to her father on a matter very near to his heart.

"What a wife she would make," he said exultantly. "What a helpmate for an ambitious man, but first I shall have to clear her dear little head of all these vagaries. Woman Suffrage, bah! Women are better off without it, as this dear little enthusiast proves in her own charming person. No doubt I am a scoundrel and a hypocrite, but everything is fair in love and war."

He went away leaving a better impression on the whole than had been on the girl's mind when he came. Compared with her father, he sank inestimably in her esteem. His fiery strength, allied to cold caution and wondrous ambition, won her admiration, but she could not fail to see that the nature of the man was not as pure, as modest, as manly as that of her dear father. Her father was ambitious to serve the commonwealth, eager to give of his best to that end, without desiring to share in the honors which the commonwealth had to bestow, while Mr. Sagamore put self above all things. He would serve his country only on condition that it would bestow its highest honors upon him in return. Granted that the man was honest and incorruptible; that he gave of his best to the State and Nation, still he was not the man her father was. He, too, was honest and incorruptible and infinitely more capable, yet with the best of opportunities for self-advancement, he had remained for a score of years in the background, and was coming out now only because he thought he could be of more use to his country at the Nation's Capitol than here. The honor had not tempted him. It could have been his many, many years before. Myrtle knew all this, and by comparison with her father's pure character, Mr. Sagamore, who would have shown by contrast with almost any other man, shrank to very small proportions.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" murmured Myrtle, thinking of all this, "either Papa is very much better than all other men, or I am dreadfully prejudiced against Mr. Sagamore. I

ought not to expect so much in a man, but when I see it all in my father, how can I help it? I would wish that our leader be pure as well as strong, noble as well as able, and capable of self-sacrifice, if necessary. Mr. Sagamore would, I am sure, abandon us in our need, to save himself, or even if he thought that we hampered him in his upward climb. We cannot trust him. Oh dear, I do hope and pray to God that Papa will see the light. What a champion he would be! What a leader for our Cause! Oh, dear God, grant it!"

"Myrtle," said her father, on the evening of Mr. Sagamore's departure, when they were alone in his study, "Mr. Sagamore has spoken to me of you."

Myrtle colored deeply, but her face expressed the astonishment she felt.

"He asked my permission to pay his addresses to you."

"And what did you tell him, Papa?"

"I told him that he had my permission."

"Oh, Papa!"

"What could I do?" he replied. "Every man should be permitted to plead his suit. He is a rising man, Myrtle; no man can tell how high he will go."

"Would you have me marry him, Papa?" said Myrtle, pressing her cheek to his. "Would you have me marry a man I do not love, for the sake of the honors which he may some day attain?"

"No, Myrtle, God forbid."

"Papa," said Myrtle, still clasping his neck, with her cheek pressed to his, "Mr. Sagamore is very wise, is he not?"

"Yes, my dear—brainy you mean."

"And ambitious?"

"Yes, Myrtle."

"And also very masterful?"

"I believe so—ambitious men usually are."

"He is, Papa, but as wise as he is, he does not know your daughter; as ambitious as he is, and as masterful, he will never win nor conquer her. Oh, I can see it all now. He would not consider his wife at all save as a lesser part of him. A being to help him in his upward climb, and one

who should find all her joy, her happiness, in contemplating his greatness."

"There are women, my dear, who would be content with a lot such as you describe."

"No doubt, Papa, but your loving daughter is not one of them."

"But upon what do you base such a supposition, Myrtle?"

"Principally upon the fact that he went to you in place of coming to me. I am in his opinion a child, a nonentity, not worth considering."

"But Myrtle, how can you say that? Was it not right for him to come to me before addressing himself to you?"

"No, Papa, it was not. I am capable of deciding for myself. It is my right to so decide, but he goes to you as if I were a child whose opinion is secondary. I am at my own disposal, and a man who would win me must address himself to me."

"But, my dear sweet child," said her father, gazing at her in helpless wonder, "I am sure he meant no wrong, no disrespect, no derogation to you in this."

"Then, Papa, he has not the right instincts."

"It was his respect for me that prompted him to come to me."

"Then his respect for you is greater than his love for me."

"But, Myrtle—"

"Dear Papa, forgive me, but indeed a girl should be considered and consulted first of all in a matter so important; but Mr. Sagamore counts upon your influence over me to assist him, and—and—I detest him."

"Well, I wash my hands of it," said poor Mr. Watterson. "You are an incomprehensible little girl, Myrtle."

"Papa, do you believe that I love you?"

"Yes, Myrtle," he replied.

"Do you not know that I reverence you above all the world?"

"I believe so, Myrtle."

"Then you know that the slightest disrespect shown to you by any man would wound me very deeply, but I must

nevertheless insist that this is my right. This is the latter end of the nineteenth century, you know, and women are no longer given away like children, nor bargained for like chattels. I would not marry any man of whom you disapproved, because I know that your disapproval would have a very solid foundation. Nevertheless, I say Mr. Sagamore should first have come to me, and of me learned my wishes, my sentiments and inclinations, and if successful in his suit, it would then have been his place to go to you for your sanction and approval. I am not a child nor a doll, but a woman, and as such, man's equal. As a maiden, Papa, I am man's superior, because he must sue to win me. When I am won," continued Myrtle, holding up her finger to command his close attention, "when I am won, Papa, I will acknowledge myself to be the lesser half of a splendid whole."

"Not the lesser half, Myrtle," cried her father, smiling, "Surely, surely not the lesser half, my dear!"

"Yes, Papa," said Myrtle, blushing, "the lesser half. I do not say that I would have done so a year ago, or even six months ago, but something has happened since then, something that teaches me so."

The something had happened one moonlight night beneath a giant oak within the shadow of the old gray house. There upon a spot forever after hallowed in her memory, her stalwart lover had mastered her—had wrung from her reluctant lips the sweet confession that made her forever his. And on the following day he had shown himself as superior to her in strength of character as in physical force. Yes, she would be the lesser half as she humbly owned, glorying in the manly strength of him to whom in her heart she had sworn allegiance.

"Now, Papa, good night," said Myrtle, kissing him sweetly. "Never, never think of Mr. Sagamore as a possible husband for your daughter."

"Poor John," said Mr. Watterson softly, when he was alone. "Poor, poor John."

Myrtle hastened to her chamber, with burning cheeks, and there for fully five minutes remained motionless, standing in a flood of light before her mirror, gazing at the reflection of herself behind the glass. Mr. Sagamore loved

her and sought her hand in marriage. Mr. Sagamore, who aspired to the highest honors in the land, and who if there is aught in physiognomy would surely attain them. The thought was enough to make proud the heart of any girl. What was there about her to attract men of such widely varying character as this strong, ambitious politician, and the weak and womanish Elmer? And there was Sherman, her incomparable Sherman. And Richard, too, had loved her! Alas! She rarely thought of Richard now.

"You are not in the least little bit beautiful," said Myrtle frowning at her reflection in the glass; "and so you needn't be vain. Silly! Oh, dear! I wish—I wish" she paused and smiling a little to herself, and blushing guiltily, this creature of vanity bent forward and tenderly kissed her image in the glass. "I wish, that—you—were—Sherman," she said and sighing, turned away.

CHAPTER XL.

IN WHICH ELMER RETURNS.

It was with mingled feelings of pleasure and apprehension that Elmer, after an absence of seven months, stepped into his father's bank. Pleasure he felt at the thought of meeting the man whom he loved and esteemed above all other men, and apprehension lest the reception awaiting him should be one of violence and anger. He went in, however, without hesitation, and nodding lightly to Ainsworth and Johnson in passing, he presented himself with his old winning smile before the eyes of the banker.

"Ah!" said Mr. Marblemore, rising slowly, "Is it you, Elmer?"

He said it awkwardly and stood holding the young man's hand without pressing it. Upon Elmer's return from college the banker had folded the boy in his arms with a bear-like hug, and Elmer felt the difference keenly.

"Yes, Daddy," he said in subdued tones.

"You are looking well," said Mr. Marblemore, lamely.

This was very true. Travel and occupation had agreed with Elmer. His color was good. His cheeks had filled out. He was a bit broader in the shoulders, and had come to carry himself with an assured confidence which, added to the negligent grace that came natural to him, improved him very much.

"Daddy, if you will sit down, I should like to. Thank you. Did my work please you, Daddy?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Marblemore, coldly.

"Daddy," said Elmer softly, placing his slender white hand upon the banker's enormous paw as it rested limply upon the desk. "Are you very angry with me?"

"I am sorry for what has happened, Elmer," replied the banker, passing his hand across his bald head. "You acted like an infernal, heartless villain, sir, toward that poor girl."

"I know it, Daddy, I know it well, but you should re-

member that what I did was done in the old days. Do you wish me to marry her, Daddy?"

He regarded the banker anxiously while awaiting his reply. He did not mean to marry little Rosie, but it would do him no harm to intimate a humble submission to his father's will.

"Elmer," said Mr. Marblemore, slowly, "did Rosie yield to you upon persuasion, or did you go through a kind of ceremony as is said, making her believe that she was your wife?"

Elmer became red and pale by turns, as he met the banker's bull-like gaze.

"If she surrendered her womanhood to gratify a passion merely, she is unworthy the name of honest woman," continued the banker huskily. "If trusting to a promise to marry, she forgot all womanly chastity, she would dishonor the name of wife, but if she gave herself to you honestly, believing herself to be your wife, then by the God in Heaven, boy," said Mr. Marblemore, bringing his fist down with terrific force, "you shall marry her or leave my house with the clothes you wear and nothing more! Answer me!"

There was something so terrible in this mighty man's anger that Elmer quailed before his glance and trembled like a woman.

"Daddy," he said with a gasp, "don't be violent."

"I do not mean to be, Elmer," said Mr. Marblemore, in a quieter voice, "but I must know and at once. I have the word of a woman to whom falsehood is impossible that this is so—that you went through some sham ceremony, making this young woman believe herself married to you. I do not doubt Aunt Sadie's word, but I do doubt the word of the girl, as I have reason to believe that she told different stories. General Hamilton, to whom she went for protection, came to me demanding justice for her on the ground that you had seduced her under promise of marriage. Now what have you to say?"

"I practiced no deception, Daddy—made no promise," said Elmer, pale to the lips.

"Then the girl has made her bed and she must lie on

it; but the thing has spoiled all my pleasure and pride in you."

"I will regain your esteem, Daddy," said Elmer eagerly, "I know now what a great man you are, and I am proud of the name you have given me."

"Things will never be the same between us, Elmer," said the banker, sadly.

"Oh, yes they will, Daddy," said Elmer, with confidence. "Come Daddy, don't look so down-hearted. We can't all be as good and pure as you are. Most of us have got to sow a crop of wild oats before settling down finally. I am done now. I am deeply in earnest. I mean to work."

He then launched into an account of his travels with Davidson. Told of the sights he had seen, of the men he had met, and of the many little things they had encountered by the way, mingling so much drollery with the whole that Mr. Marblemore first smiled, then chuckled, then roared with laughter.

"Stop, you rogue," he said at last. "You do not deserve to be listened to or forgiven. Ah, Elmer, I wish you had not done this thing. Do you know she is very ill? Poor little thing." He sat for a moment in thoughtful silence, drumming upon the desk with his thick fingers. "She must be provided for. If she will go away upon her recovery, she shall never want as long as she lives. I wish—I wish she had not gone to the General. Do you know of the action taken against you by the Young Woman's Club?"

"Yes," said Elmer, contemptuously. "The newspapers made a big enough to-do about it. That is all it will amount to."

"Think so? I have paid little attention to it all. Candidly my sympathy is with the women. I think you had best make yourself scarce for a while. You can take a berth in the Chicago house or in New York if you prefer; but go and see your mother now; she is very anxious about her darling."

He did not know that Elmer had prepared himself for this meeting by a hurried visit to his mother, nor did Elmer enlighten him now. He went into the street with a smile, and pausing in the door he stood for a moment lightly

twirling his slender cane. He was as usual elegantly attired and presented a handsome appearance standing enframed in the wide doorway.

"Well, that's done, anyhow," he murmured, lighting a cigarette in the leisurely fashion that characterized him. "The old boy will come around in time. The best thing I can do is to go straight to Myrtle while my luck holds, and get the first meeting over with. Sweet Myrtle! God! how I love that girl! This must be the real thing or it couldn't have held me so long. I'm bewitched as sure as fate!"

He nodded brightly to two young ladies, old friends who were passing, but they swept by him without answering his greeting save by a contemptuous glance. He looked after them in the greatest surprise.

"The devil! Am I so much changed?" he muttered, "or didn't they see me?"

He felt vaguely uneasy as he made his way around the square. The streets were alive with people, for they were in the thick of the political campaign, and the leaders of both parties were exceedingly active. He heard the strains of a band in the distance, and the shouts of a multitude came faintly from the rallying ground. People were hurrying thither, crowds of them, laughing and chatting gayly. He thought that they glanced at him oddly in passing, and this reflection came upon him with something like a shock. Very few replied to his greetings, and their bows were stiff and constrained. No one sought speech with him. None paused to shake him by the hand.

All this astonished him. As he had told his father, he was well aware of the publicity given to his latest escapade, but he was far from expecting dark glances on that account. Rather, he had returned prepared in all modesty to disclaim the merit of the thing. It would be difficult, perhaps, to convey a clear comprehension of the kind of reasoning upon which this feeling of smug complacency was founded. In the days of his greatest depravity this young man had met with smiles on every hand. He had been hailed as leader by those of his stripe, and slyly winked at by the more sedate. He had been kindly received by staid matrons who, though they shook a playfully remonstrant finger at him,

yet intrusted their daughters to his care and in every possible way encouraged him to a closer intimacy with them. With all this in mind, it was not unnatural for a young man whose point of view was utterly warped to suppose that this late notoriety would rather increase his personal popularity than otherwise. The action taken by the Woman's Progressive Union provoked his laughter. Why, he knew all the girls comprising that body. He had known them from childhood. He had played with them, danced with them, joked and chaffed them for years, and in pure fun had proposed marriage to half of them and been accepted. He had laughed heartily when first their action had come to his knowledge. It was all a joke, of course. Madcap Fanny owed him one, and in this way she had repaid him for many a merry evening's fun. But, to his intense astonishment and disgust, the joke was taken seriously by the public. The young women were warmly commended on every hand, and he was held up to the public scorn. He had disliked this notoriety intensely, and this feeling of disgust he had thought rather a fine thing, a proof positive of his reformation. He had returned resolved to live down the past. His experience on the road had strengthened in him a taste for business. He was determined to go deeply into his father's affairs and show himself worthy of the great man's trust and esteem, hoping, moreover, by his future life and work to redeem himself in the eyes of her who, by his past, he had without doubt grievously offended.

His passion for Myrtle had remained unchanged, or changed only in that it had grown deeper with time and absence. He had written her a long letter in the beginning, and she had replied to it in a spirit of charming camaraderie, though she spoke mainly of Rosie, telling him of her sorrow and seclusion, and begging him for a word of love for the poor girl, promising to convey any message to her that he might be pleased to send. He wrote no more. He dared not, in view of his impending exposure. And so time had passed and the exposure had come, and then the uproar produced by the action of the club, of which Myrtle was the head. That Myrtle had taken any part in that matter

he did not believe. Had she not especially denied the responsibility of the thing, placing it where it belonged, on Madcap Fanny's shoulders? He believed sincerely that she loved him, for this young man in his heart thought himself irresistible, and, hugging this delusion to his soul, he was convinced that Myrtle's disclaimer was meant for his eyes alone. So he had accepted it, at least, and he had looked forward to seeing her, not doubting that by a proper show of humility and penitence he could win her forgiveness.

And now he met with cold glances everywhere! That his father should show anger was in the nature of things to be expected. That Myrtle would be indignant was wholly natural, seeing that she loved him and longed to marry him, but that these, his every-day acquaintances, should actually betray hostility toward him was really a little too much! Elmer quite swelled with indignation. He held his head high and cast haughty glances around. This did not help matters at all. On the contrary, those who before had merely looked askance at the young man now sneered with open scorn. Men paused to stare after him; women looked another way; boys hooted derisively; children pointed at him. A crowd began to gather at his heels. Elmer pushed on, feeling ill at ease.

He had nearly reached the corner of the fashionable street in which he lived, when General Hamilton turned it, coming towards him. The old warrior was, as usual, deeply absorbed in an exchange, which he held folded to the width of a column. In his irresolution whether to advance upon a foe so formidable or beat a hasty retreat, Elmer paused for one moment, and, looking up, the General espied him and stopped in his tracks. The spectators held their breath. For one moment the General glared, then, dropping his paper, he took a firm grip of his stick, and, bringing it up across his shoulder with a furious gesture, he advanced upon the shrinking young man. To avoid him, Elmer had either to step out into the gutter or turn and run for it. He chose the gutter. Without glancing to the left or right, the General marched on, his thick mustache curling with scorn. Elmer got up on the walk again, and, amid the hooting of the crowd, turned hastily into the side

street, which, owing to the political rally at the other end of the town, was almost deserted.

"What the devil does this mean?" muttered the young man in mingled rage and wonder.

The General's wrath he could understand, but not the scorn of the crowd. He did not know that the villainy he had practiced on poor little Rosie had for many days been the principal topic of conversation in the city homes, in the shops, offices, stores, in saloons and on street corners, and that public sentiment, stimulated by the action of the young women, Rosie's friends, overwhelmingly condemned him. He walked on in a kind of daze. He bowed to Billy Boyle, passing in his surrey. Billy nodded affably enough, but Hannah, who sat beside her husband, bridled up and glared at him in speechless indignation. Mrs. Hammersmith bowed very nicely, but Mrs. Ferguson and Mrs. Sawyer, approaching in company, crossed the street to avoid him. The Rev. Mortimer Ringrose paused to shake him by the hand, but Mr. Traviston, his brother minister, deliberately put his hands behind him, giving the young man a glance of cold contempt. Father Fargo, whom he met shortly after, absolutely paused and snorted at him. Dr. Fairfield cut him dead, and Grace Fairfield, his niece, walking arm in arm with Fanny Rowland, cast down her eyes and passed him by with blushing cheeks; while Fanny, staring him squarely in the face, cut him dead. He had lifted his hat to greet the young ladies, and had paused, prepared to reproach them in mimic anger, and he was left standing with his hat in his hand while the girls walked on.

"What does this mean?" he muttered for the third time. "Are they really down on me?"

He felt extremely foolish and very angry and deeply indignant, for his vanity, the largest part of him, was wounded. He went on with a pouting expression, meeting the eyes of all with a half-challenging, half-supplicating glance. He passed his father's mansion, walking rapidly, turned in toward the old gray house of the Wattersons, and rang the bell. Franklin came to the door. Elmer stepped past him into the hall, and then, without hesitation, into the parlor, Franklin following.

"Is Miss Watterson at home?" he asked, imperiously.

"No," replied Franklin, shortly.

"Where is she?" asked Elmer.

"She called at General Hamilton's to see Miss Rosewood, who is very sick," replied Franklin, gravely.

Elmer scowled at the man, who stood negligently enough with his hand resting on the back of a chair.

"I do not want Aunt Sadie," he said, sharply, "but Miss Myrtle."

Franklin bowed without a word.

"Is she in?"

"Yes."

"Where is she?"

"In the library."

Elmer started toward the dining-room, off which the library branched.

"Wait," said Franklin, "I'll see if she cares to see you."

Elmer flung him a curse, without pausing. Knocking at the library door, he opened it and went in. Myrtle, who was sitting at her desk in the little study which she had arranged in one corner, looked up quickly from her writing, and, seeing who it was, she started to her feet. Elmer advanced with outstretched hand, smiling brightly, but she retreated, holding both hands behind her, coloring deeply. Elmer paused like one thunderstruck.

"Won't you shake hands with me, Myrtle?" he said, reproachfully.

"No, sir; I will not," she replied, hot with anger. "I am surprised at your effrontery in coming here."

Elmer regarded her in deep dismay. He had not expected such a reception from Myrtle. Far from it. That she would be indignant, even angry, he had expected; but he had never dreamed that she would absolutely refuse to take his hand! He had thought that a proper show of humility and repentance would win her forgiveness, and that he could then continue his wooing where he had left off and carry it to ultimate success. He had reasoned it out scores of times—her reception of him—her sorrow and anger—his penitence and humble plea for pardon—her forgiveness and his triumph. Heavens! did he not know

scores of girls who *would* receive his attentions eagerly—the more eagerly because of his madcap escapades?

"I am very sorry, Myrtle," he said, feebly. "I did not think that *you* would meet me like this."

She did not reply, but stood shrinking from him behind her chair, with her voluminous skirts gathered in her hand, as if she dreaded his contaminating touch. Elmer saw, and marveled to see on that sweet, gentle face an expression of hauteur and anger. Blushing now, now pale, with trembling lips and shrinking body, she stood gazing upon the wretch, with eyes enlarged by fear, disdain and anger.

"Myrtle, dear Myrtle, do not look at me like that," cried Elmer, advancing a step in his eagerness, but pausing once more as, with a movement of horror, she shrank further from him. "I hardly know what to say to win your forgiveness. I know you are angry with me, and you have a right to be—*you* of all people! But believe me, Myrtle, I am not the man now I was in those days. You know how wild I was and headstrong. It is to you I owe my reform, but then that for which you condemn me now was already done and could not be undone. I am very sorry, Myrtle."

He paused, but again she did not speak. Her indignation had changed to strong disgust, which could be read in the curling lip and disdainful glance.

"If you knew the bitter moments I have passed reflecting upon the evil I have done, believe me, Myrtle, you would pity and forgive me," continued Elmer, made bolder by her silence. "Myrtle, I never really loved any woman but you. I loved you always. It was this love that turned me from my wild life. Do not, then, turn from me now, dear Myrtle. Forgive me; marry me, and help me to begin a new life. I will redeem the past by a lifetime of earnest devotion. Oh, do not look at me so!" he cried, throwing out his hands with a movement of despair. "Tell me to go away for a while, only be kind to me. I know I should not have come so soon; but—but I was so sure of your kindness, Myrtle, so certain that you would understand and forgive. Am I so much worse than other men?

Myrtle, I am asking you to marry me—to marry me, Myrtle. What more can a man do?"

His eager passion lent to his manner a quality of sincerity and ardor that would have moved to pity any heart not wrung by the sufferings of his victim. But Myrtle saw in him only the vile seducer of her friend. In her heart there was no room for aught but disgust and burning anger. Once or twice she had opened her lips to speak, but he had pressed on with an eagerness that admitted of no interruption. She stood, now that he had ceased speaking, gazing at him in speechless indignation. That he should have come to her, this monster of selfishness—to her, Myrtle Watterson, with a declaration of love! Oh, it was too, too horrible! She could have wept for shame, but for the passion of anger that swept through her, drying up her tears and depriving her for moments of the power of speech.

"Marry you!" she said at last, in a voice scarce recognizable to herself. "I would rather die! You are a thing so utterly vile in my eyes that no words of mine can express the contempt in which I hold you. I despise you! I loathe the sight of you! I scorn your proposal! The day is past when a woman will stoop to such as you!"

She stood, all pale with anger, half leaning towards him, her hand still holding aside her skirts to avoid his contaminating touch, although he stood quite the length of the great desk away from her. But with the last word she released her dress, which swelled around her in graceful folds, and still gazing at him with a glance expressive of the deepest loathing, she groped above her head for the bell-cord. She caught it after an ineffectual attempt or two, and pulled it once, twice, thrice and again, the last time with such violence that the cord parted overhead and came dangling down about her shoulders.

Franklin came in in hot haste. He saw Elmer standing there in a kind of daze, gazing across at Myrtle, who had turned her back upon him, and now stood with trembling fingers trying to free herself from the entangling folds of the cord. Franklin understood it all at a glance. He opened wide the door and stood aside, clearing his

throat with a stentorian "Ahem!" Elmer, awakening from the trance of astonishment into which the girl's unexpected violence had thrown him, turned around at the sound, and encountered Franklin's significant glance. He paused irresolutely. Franklin again cleared his throat, even more vehemently than before, and, with a last agonized glance at Myrtle, the young man turned and went out, Franklin following.

Myrtle, leaning her arms against the window, bowed her head upon them and burst into a passion of weeping.

Elmer, stupefied with surprise, walked very slowly and with his head down, so that Franklin, who preceded him with great alacrity, had thrown wide the front door ere the young man had half crossed the parlor. Aunt Sadie came in as Franklin stood waiting with the door in his hand, and smiling at the man, whose somber face brightened at sight of her, she broke at once into an account of how she had found her friends. She went into the parlor, and standing before a great mirror near the door, she proceeded to remove her hat and pat her beautiful hair into position, talking all the time with great volubility, not doubting that Franklin had followed her into the room as was his wont. He was more a friend than a servant, was Franklin, and indeed, so were all the domestics in that house. Mrs. Osborne was nearly recovered, and Mrs. Danforth's baby was doing oh so nicely, and Mrs. Ringrose, poor thing, was sick again, and—

"Aunt Sadie," said Elmer, interrupting her.

She turned around, a good deal startled, and stared at Elmer as he stood before her, pale but smiling his old, winning smile, and holding out both hands to her in greeting. Aunt Sadie put her hands behind her, as Myrtle had done, and kept them there, retreating a step or two like a child who fears that violence will be used upon her.

"You, too, Aunt Sadie!" said Elmer, stung almost to madness by what he conceived to be his ill usage. "I didn't think though all the world turned upon me that *you* would do so."

"I am very, very sorry, Elmer, but I cannot take your hand after what you have done."

Tears welled up into her eyes and rolled slowly down her cheeks, as she looked at Elmer and marked his keen distress.

"Why, why," he cried, "am I any worse than a dozen men whom I can name? Good God! One would think that I was a murderer!"

"Elmer, you have spoken an awful word. Pray God it may not prove a true one," said Aunt Sadie, very gravely.

"What do you mean?" asked Elmer, startled by her solemn tone.

"Elmer, you wronged little Rosie," said Aunt Sadie, sorrowfully, "a girl with the mind of a child, but a loving, loyal, constant heart. She is not well, Elmer. She is very ill. She is dying, slowly but surely, and all for the want of the love and care which you owe to her. She is your wife, Elmer, in the eyes of God you are her husband. She is waiting for you, eagerly waiting and hoping that you will come to her. Come, Elmer, come and make little Rosie happy."

She stretched forth her hands in earnest entreaty as she stood before him. His glance wavered and fell before those streaming eyes; he looked down, pouting.

"She is dying, Elmer," said Aunt Sadie. "As sure as I stand before you, she will die before the summer is out, if you do not go to her. Come, darling, you know I have always loved you dearly because you were so sweet and winning, and oh so good as a little child. I love you now, indeed, indeed I do, only I cannot take your hand and kiss you as I used, while that poor child is dying. Will you not come, dear Elmer? She has given you all that woman holds dear. She has borne all the shame, the guilt, the pain and misery, without once complaining of you, and without ceasing to love you, and to believe in you. Is not this worth some little love in return? Won't you come with me, darling Elmer?"

All that a sweet, loving woman could say she said, standing there before him with clasped hands and streaming eyes. Elmer answered not a word, but stood looking down, without a sign of softening or of yielding.

"Darling Elmer, won't you come?" pleaded Aunt Sadie, as he continued silent.

"No," he replied, roughly. "What do you take me for?"

"A man, Elmer," replied Aunt Sadie, very low. "I took you for a man."

"Bah! You're all down on me," he cried, peevishly. "I don't believe she's dying; anyhow, it's nothing to me. Let me alone."

Sick at heart Aunt Sadie stepped back, and Elmer walked past her, holding his head very high. At the outer door, where Franklin still stood waiting, he met Mr. Watterson. The big man paused as if thunderstruck at sight of Elmer in that house.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded in a deep voice.

"I—I—called—to—see—Miss Watterson," stammered Elmer, paling to the lips.

Mr. Watterson glared at him for a moment in speechless wrath. Elmer, utterly cowed by that terrible glance, shrank limp and pale against the wall behind.

"Franklin," said Mr. Watterson, quietly turning away, "show this man out; and should he call again kick him off the premises."

"Yes, sir," responded Franklin, with alacrity. "Shall I do it now, sir?"

"No, not now."

"Sorry, sir. This way out," cried Franklin, turning upon Elmer, with a significant wave of his hand.

And Elmer slunk away.

Smarting with rage and shame, the young man hurried homeward and burst with sullen violence into the small sitting-room where his mother spent most of her waking hours. She was not there now, however. Clara sat softly strumming on the piano.

"You look hot, Elmer," she said, smiling.

"Yes," he replied, in a surly voice.

"Was Papa cross?"

"Not very."

"Pooh, you mustn't mind him. He'll soon come around."

A sudden idea flashed into Elmer's mind as he looked at her. Why not marry Clara, and thus at once please his father and show his scorn of the woman who had scorned him? But would she accept him? He believed so.

"Clara," he said, sitting down beside her, "you know Daddy's wish in regard to us, and Mama's earnest hope?"

Clara rustled her music sheets a bit, then slowly turned around and looked at him.

"Yes, I know," she said.

"Shall we please them in this matter, Clara?"

She did not reply at once, but sat regarding him thoughtfully.

"You are not enthusiastic, Elmer."

"Shall I go down on my knees and swear that I adore you?" said Elmer, bitterly. "You know you would not believe me if I did."

"No. I wouldn't believe you."

"Then why not be sensible?"

"What do you want?"

"I am asking you to marry me."

"To please Papa and Mama?"

"Yes, if you will have it so. I don't suppose that you particularly care for anyone?"

He paused, suddenly recalling her attachment to Sherman. He eyed her curiously while awaiting her reply, wondering how that affair had ended.

"No," said Clara, looking away a little wistfully. "No, I don't care for anyone in particular."

"How about Sherman?" he asked.

"He did not love me," said Clara, coloring deeply.

"Did he say so?"

"Yes, I asked him."

"You asked him!" he cried, surveying her in astonishment.

"Yes," she replied, with calmness. "He loves Myrtle, and Myrtle loves him."

"How do you know that?"

"He told me of his love, and in the light of that knowledge I could recall a thousand things to prove that of Myrtle."

He took a turn or two through the room, in great irritation. Why was it that these two young women had loved Sherman and not him? He could win the love of a certain kind of women with ease, but he had never in his career awakened a passion in the heart of any deep thinking woman. He could see the wide difference between Myrtle and Clara, but he knew that however small of soul the latter became by contrast with the former, she still was far superior in mind to childish little Rosie and other women who had favored him. Clara sat regarding him listlessly, indifferent, apparently, whether he continued his proposal or not.

"Well, Clara," he said pausing before her, having apparently come to some conclusion. "What do you say? You know me thoroughly. What I have been, and what I am. Shall we marry?"

"Yes, we might as well."

Her indifference struck him hard.

"You don't appear over-gratified," he said.

"Let us understand each other, Elmer. I am doing this first, to please my father and your mother, and second, because I am really indifferent whom I marry. Marriage either awakens love or kills it, and, as we have none to kill, we may reasonably expect that our union will beget a regard between us. If so, all will be well. If not, we can live apart. Is that understood?"

"Yes."

"I had different ideas once, I own," said Clara, wistfully; "but they are gone forever. If I cannot please myself, I will at least please my good, kind father, and make him happy."

Mrs. Marblemore, when informed of their purpose, shook her head, showing little pleasure in the promised union. Mr. Marblemore received the intelligence with mingled feelings of sorrow and exultation. "Time was, Elmer," he said, "when I would have been overjoyed at this, but now I am almost tempted to withhold my consent. Clara deserves a better husband, and you do not deserve so good a wife. However, if you are both resolved, I have had this hope in my heart too long to say no. Only, let it be soon."

And so it was settled.

CHAPTER XLI.

A MORTAL BLOW.

Clara being entirely indifferent and Elmer feeling his position uncomfortable, the wedding day was set but three weeks distant. Mr. Marblemore in view of what had passed and sympathizing as he had said with public sentiment, suppressed his natural love of ostentatious display, and the preparations which went briskly on were all on a quiet scale. Elmer kept himself very close during those three weeks. He hardly ventured out at all, and when he did he was sure to meet with some unpleasant reminder of popular contempt. Once he was assaulted near his home, and his assailant, young Thomas, a drug clerk, was hailed as a hero by the populace. Elmer became desperately afraid of the public street. He wanted to abridge the term of waiting agreed upon; but Clara refused to entertain the thought for an instant. Neither would she consent to have the ceremony performed elsewhere, as Elmer urged. She went about as usual, coldly confirming the reports of her contemplated marriage. She cared nothing for public opinion, and she wished to show it. The dark glances of her old-time friends, the scornful sneers of the general public, the satiric flings of the General, the grave disapproval of Mrs. Butler, she bore them all with apparent equanimity. But beneath her cold exterior her heart ached bitterly. All the future looked dark to her eyes. Not only did she despise the cowardly spirit, the foul character of him whom she had chosen, but he personally was so repulsive to her that the touch of his hand made her shudder. She looked forward with absolute horror to her wedding day, but sustained by a mistaken pride, she never for one moment thought of receding from the bargain she had made.

Rosie, meanwhile, continued entirely unconscious of these things going on round about her. She knew nothing of Elmer's return, and in silence, but with faith unshaken,

she awaited his home coming, confident that he would come to her and take her away to live with him happily ever after. She did not grow in strength as rapidly as Aunt Sadie could wish, neither did she become noticeably weaker. Mam Sue carried her each morning to the great armchair beside the window, where she remained all day, gazing out with wistfully pathetic eyes. She had Carlo for company, or Mam Sue, or Aunt Sadie. Dr. Fairfield looked grave when Aunt Sadie questioned him as to the condition of her little charge. He shook his head, declaring that there was nothing at all the matter with her. By all the rules of nature and all the arts he knew, she should of rights be up and about, gaining strength every hour of the day. But yet she continued weak and languid, and of an aspect so wan that Aunt Sadie was deeply troubled. The girl wanted an incentive and—ah, well, the good lady knew what that incentive was. Rosie was eating her heart out waiting for Elmer.

"You should rouse yourself, Rosie," urged Aunt Sadie. "Make an effort, my love."

"I will, Aunt," Rosie replied, smiling; "when *he* comes."

This was her one reply, her one hope, her faith, her very life. She never expressed the slightest curiosity about the outside world. She cared nothing about it. She never asked after her mother. Her constant thought was of Elmer. When her mother's name was mentioned in her presence she frowned and looked away. She was happy with Aunt Sadie, and quite content with the General, but uneasy in the presence of the younger folks. She was never quite so happy, however, as in those hours which she spent alone with Mam Sue.

That good soul was a mine of jollity, a treasure of bubbling humor. She would sit for hours beside her little pet, telling stories of the South, and her boisterous laugh cheered Rosie more than anything else in the world. Mam Sue guarded her jealously from all intrusion, admitting but a few favored friends, and rigorously barring out the merely curious. But she was not always successful in turning back a visitor. Sometimes one more insistent than the others got

by her, and poor little Rosie suffered a bad quarter of an hour.

One day, Rosie sitting pensively beside the open window heard a commotion below stairs, which momentarily grew into a violent uproar. Mam Sue's deep voice was raised in evident protest against unwelcome intrusion; a masculine voice replying gently, sought to soothe the angry woman, but all in vain. Nevertheless, the man came on regardless. Rosie listening feverishly, clearly distinguished the voice of Mr. Ringrose, and she hoped ardently that Mam Sue would prevail in the struggle, which every moment came nearer and nearer; but this was not to be. His Reverence came on sturdily, with Mam Sue storming at his heels, defying him all the way.

"I'se tell Mas' Dave," Rosie heard her say. "Mas' Dave'll fix yo', he will."

"Be quiet, my good woman," replied Mr. Ringrose. "I must see Rosie. It is my duty to visit the sick. I must do my duty."

"Huh!" growled Mam Sue, "yo' no good. Mas' Dave say so. Yo' go way now, right away. Just yo' wait. I'se telafoam Mas' Dave, dis yere minute."

"My good woman, be quiet; you annoy me extremely. I must do my duty."

He had gained the door by this time, though Mam Sue still clung to him vociferating at the top of her voice. Knocking gently, he did not wait for an invitation to enter, but came in, looking considerably flushed and flurried. Whirling within the door he tore himself free from the black woman's detaining grasp, and closed the door in her very face. Shooting the bolt swiftly, he turned to little Rosie, who had sat in breathless agitation watching the struggle. Mam Sue thus peremptorily barred out, belabored the door with her huge fists and screamed imprecations at the minister.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Rosie, in this way," said Mr. Ringrose, smoothing his ruffled plumage, "but I wished to speak to you on a matter of the greatest importance. The—the colored person refused to admit me; so I was compelled to force my way in this unseemly manner."

Rosie gazed at him with her childishly pathetic eyes, but said no word in reply. He was deeply shocked by her appearance. So thin, so frail, so terribly wan and wasted, she looked as she sat before him, that he was stricken with a feeling of deep pity.

"Why, Rosie!" he said, throwing up his white hands in genuine horror. "I had no idea—"

"Come out o' dar yo'," interposed Mam Sue from without. "Don' lis'en to him, honey. Don' yo' min' dat bad man. Mas' Dave trow dat ting out his office, Mas' Dave did. Don' yo' lis'en to him, honey!"

"I've come from your mother, Rosie," said Mr. Ringrose, as soon as he could make himself heard above the uproar outside. "She is very sorry for what she did."

Rosie gazed at him with parted lips, but said nothing. Mam Sue belabored the door and screamed unceasingly.

"Jes' yo' wait," she cried, wrathfully. "Ah'll send fo' Mas' Dave dis yere blessed minute. Ah will. Jes' yo' wait, Mas' Dave 'ull fix yo' sah. Ah ring him up and tela-foam him right away dis minute."

His Reverence turned uneasily to the door. All was quiet now. Mam Sue could be heard shuffling away in the distance.

"She wants you to come home, Rosie," continued Mr. Ringrose, stroking his silky mustache with shaking fingers. "You must come home, child. You should not stay here any longer. Fie! fie! Rosie, to live alone under the roof of a bachelor! I am shocked! It is very wrong. Your place is at home with your mother."

"I'll never go home any more," replied Rosie, quivering. "Never! Mama never loved me. She drove me out in the night and the General took me in. It isn't wrong for me to stay with the good General, else Aunt Sadie would tell me. Please go away," she continued, agitatedly. "I'm not strong and—and I don't like you. Please go at once."

"But your mother is nearly crazy, Rosie," said His Reverence, rubbing his white hands together nervously. "She's getting reckless, she—I won't be responsible for what happens if you don't go to her. Her neighbors shun her, nobody will speak to her." He paused and stood for a

moment in a listening attitude. From below came a sharp ring. "Won't you, Rosie?"

"No, never," whispered Rosie, shrinking away.

"But, listen to me. Your mother has forgiven you. I have talked to her. I explained to her that your fall was really due to the weakness of Human Nature. Nothing more. We cannot help that weakness; she wants you, Rosie."

"Mr. Ringrose," said Rosie, suddenly, interrupting him gravely, "what is Mama to you?"

He stared at her with blanching cheeks. She returned his gaze with her large, clear eyes, until he fairly squirmed. He backed to the door, groping behind him, still facing Rosie's eyes. There was something terrible in the steadfast gaze of this stricken child.

"What is Mama to you, Mr. Ringrose?" repeated Rosie, softly.

"Nothing; she is a Sister," stammered the minister. "I am her pastor. That is all. Won't you come, Rosie?"

"No."

"But you cannot expect to stay with General Hamilton always, child."

"No," replied Rosie, turning away her eyes. "Not always,—only—only—until *he* comes for me."

"He! Who?"

"Elmer."

"Why, dear me, Rosie, you surely are not looking for him to come back to you?"

"He will come for me as soon as his father calls him back," Rosie replied, agitatedly.

"Why, why—don't you know?" cried Mr. Ringrose. "Have they not told you of his return?"

"His return!" gasped Rosie, staring at him with wide eyed wonder.

"Surely! He's been back these three weeks. Why, he's to be married on Thursday. I thought you knew."

"Married!" whispered Rosie. "Elmer!"

"To be sure. He and Clara—Miss Marblemore are to be married the day after tomorrow."

"Oh, God!"

The blow was mortal. The minister saw the small, pathetic figure shrink up—fall together as it were, and, in the place where she had sat was now a little white heap, motionless and inert as death itself.

"Rosie!" cried the man, springing forward in deep distress. "Good God! I did not mean—I did not know—"

But at this moment Mam Sue's voice, raised to a triumphant scream, came floating up from below.

"Dis way, Marse Dave. He'ah he is. Dis way, sah."

Mr. Ringrose waited for no more. He threw open the door, and rushing past Mam Sue, he plunged down the steps as if pursued by a thousand devils, the while Mam Sue, bounding into the sick chamber banged the door, and plumped herself upon the floor with her broad back against it, and sitting there, she went off into shriek after shriek of laughter, which shook her ponderous form like a jelly.

"Oh yah, yah, yah, yah," shrieked the happy soul. "Ah fooled him ta'hble! He's done flabbergasted to def'. Yah, yah, yah, yah, how he run. D'yo' see him, honey? Oh, Lawd Gawd! Yah, yah, yah. He run fo' a week dat fool man."

But just here she became aware of Rosie's inert attitude, and she sprang to her feet with a scream that brought Benjy in on the run.

"Lawd Gawd!" cried Mam Sue, frantically. "The chile am done killed. Quick, send fo' the Doctah, telefoam fo' Aunt Sadie; run and git Marse Dave. Oh, Lawd Gawd!"

She gathered up the pitiful little bundle tenderly, and carried it to the bed, with many guttural exclamations of tenderness and pity mingled with the bitterest execrations of the minister whose incautious revelations, she strongly suspected, were the cause of Rosie's swoon. She did what she could to bring her darling back to life, but the girl was still unconscious when the Doctor arrived, who quickly was followed by Aunt Sadie and General Hamilton. Mam Sue, with streaming eyes, recounted the experiences of the afternoon; told of Mr. Ringrose's visit, of her vain endeavors to bar him from the sick chamber, and Aunt Sadie had

little difficulty in divining the reason of Rosie's mortal stricture.

All that night she remained beside the little patient and all of the next day. Rosie continued unconscious despite the doctor's utmost efforts, and before evening had fallen upon the second day it became clear that the swoon would end in death.

"She may regain consciousness towards the last," said Doctor Fairfield, "but I doubt it."

Nevertheless in anticipation of that event, friends gathered around the girl in the stifling chamber, a grief-stricken little group, who sadly awaited those signs of returning life, which at best would be but a prelude to death.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN END AND A BEGINNING.

There is a hush about the quaint old mansion, a solemn stillness that betokens death. Carlo alone is visible without. He stalks about uneasily, whining now, now bursting into a long-drawn, mournful howl that echoes far and wide. It is twilight, late in August. The sun has disappeared in the west behind a bank of clouds, from whence the heavy roll of thunder, and darting lightning foretell a gathering storm. The air is heavy and oppressive. The leaves upon the trees around droop dejectedly, though every now and then a gust of wind stirs them into violent motion. For a brief moment only they tremble agitatedly, then settle with whispering awe into their former stupor. The birds are silent, save for a faint chirp now and then, which is as faintly answered by an anxious neighbor.

As twilight deepens into darkness, the clouds take on a more threatening aspect, mounting higher and higher, and spreading broadly as they mount, forced up and outward by those gusts of wind which momentarily become more frequent and more violent. Their threatening outline can now be faintly traced by the grayish blue of the sky, and now only by darting lightning which flashes in quick successive sheets of light along their outer border, each punctuated by a clap of thunder, which ends in a far-reaching roll and rumble of wonderful breadth and volume. The wind becomes stronger. Violent blasts succeed the fitful gusts, striking terror to the hearts of the feathery denizens of the trees, whose boughs bend and crack beneath its assailing fury. And then the rain! The glorious rain! First a few heavy drops as large as nuts come dancing down, and then a moment's hush, and then a pouring torrent. And the storm is on.

The storm is on and for an hour it rages with unremitting fury, frightening the soul of Benjamin, who

crouches, shivering, outside the door of the chamber wherein Rosie lies, surrounded by her friends. Doctor Fairfield is there, and Aunt Sadie, Mr. Watterson, and the General, and Myrtle, with three or four girls, Rosie's friends. They are silent all, sitting or standing around the little bed on which Rosie lies, her face thin and pale, smiling out of the white pillows as if in anticipation of approaching release and happiness. Mam Sue, divided between her grief at Rosie's impending death, and her terror of the storm, crouches at the foot of the bed, rolling her eyes from the wan face of the dying girl to a neighboring window, in assaults upon which, to her excited imagination, the storm seems to concentrate in gusts of fearful fury. The silence of the room is broken now and then by the sobs of the women, or a muttered, "Lawd Gawd!" from Mam Sue, as the rain is dashed in furious waves against the window. These sounds and the deep breathing of the men are drowned out from time to time by the crack and roll of all-pervading thunder. The large and lofty room is dimly lighted by a lamp which stands upon a dresser, but the almost continual flashings of lightning bathe the chamber and everything within in constant radiance.

"Rosie," said Aunt Sadie, bending over the girl, a little frightened by the solemn stillness within and the raging uproar without. "Rosie, can you hear me, sweet?"

A little trembling sigh answers her, and the fragile little hand lying on the coverlet makes a faint motion toward Aunt Sadie's ample palm.

"Can you understand me, darling?" said Aunt Sadie, taking the girl's hand in hers and kissing it.

Rosie's lips moved, and after several fruitless essays, she said distinctly, "Yes, Auntie."

Her eyes, made very large by the sunken face, looked up questioningly. Aunt Sadie covered the little hand with kisses.

"Is it not best to rouse her, Doctor?" she said, with a little frightened sob.

"It will do no harm," said Dr. Fairfield, gravely, "nor good, Sadie."

"She is sinking into unconsciousness again," said Aunt

Sadie, crying more and more, "and she will die if we do not rouse her."

"Death, in any case, is certain."

"But—but—"

"Do as you think best, Sadie."

"Talk to me, Rosie," said Aunt Sadie, bending low over the waning girl. "Talk to Auntie, my sweet. See, here is the good General and Myrtle, and Grace, and Fanny, your friends."

Rosie's smile deepened a little, but her eyes never left Aunt Sadie's face. Her hand pressed Aunt Sadie's hand a little, and she seemed to try to draw her nearer. Aunt Sadie bent down to Rosie's moving lips, but a tremendous shock of thunder drowned out any sounds that might have come from them. Mam Sue in her terror began to crawl on all fours towards the door, but paused and returned to her post when the thunder had ceased rolling. Benjamin, unable longer to endure the fright occasioned by the storm, came creeping in and joined the group in the death chamber.

"What did you say, darling?" asked Aunt Sadie.

The foregoing effort seemed to have revived Rosie's strength. "I—love—them all, Auntie," she murmured.

"They know it, darling, they know it well," said Aunt Sadie, kissing the little hand she held. "Can nothing be done, Doctor? Dear God, can nothing be done? Talk to me, Rosie."

"What is it, Auntie?" asked Rosie, speaking scarce without effort now. "What has happened?"

"Nothing, darling love, nothing, dear Rosie."

"Why are you crying? Why is everybody here? Oh!" she paused suddenly, with an odd little puckering of the brows, gazing with curious intensity into Aunt Sadie's wavering eyes. "Am I—worse, Auntie? Am I," with a look of wonder, "going to die?"

Aunt Sadie looked down at her through swimming tears, pressing the little hand against her cheek.

"How strange," murmured Rosie, staring as if awe-struck into Aunt Sadie's eyes.

"What is strange, darling?"

"Me—dying! Am I really? Why, I thought it hurt to die, Auntie?"

"Are you in pain, Rosie?"

"No," she replied, still regarding her with puckered brows. Suddenly the troubled frown vanished; she was smiling brightly. "Now, Auntie," she murmured, "Now, *he* will come to me."

"Yes, darling, he will, he will," Aunt Sadie cried out in deepest anguish.

"Hush, Auntie! Don't tell the General!"

General Hamilton, who stood a little behind Aunt Sadie, bowed his head with a dry sob. Doctor Fairfield bent over the girl, but her eyes remained unwaveringly fixed upon Aunt Sadie.

"Can nothing be done, Doctor?" whispered Aunt Sadie, imploringly.

Doctor Fairfield shook his head.

"Is the General here, Auntie?" whispered Rosie; "the good General, I want to see him."

"Dear little Dimples," said the General, kneeling down beside the bed.

Rosie with the greatest difficulty removed her eyes from Aunt Sadie's face and fixed them upon the General.

"Dear General," she murmured, lovingly. "So good, so kind always!"

Gazing at him in silence after that, she seemed sinking into that dangerous insensibility which Aunt Sadie dreaded.

"Look at me, Rosie," said Aunt Sadie, bending low over the girl.

Rosie obeyed the kind voice, and at once brightened into consciousness again. There seemed to be some compelling power in Aunt Sadie's eyes that upheld her spirit. Suddenly she became conscious of the raging storm outside.

"Listen, it's raining," she whispered, looking eagerly into Aunt Sadie's face. "Is that why Elmer doesn't come, Auntie?"

"Yes, darling."

"Ah, I knew it," said Rosie, radiantly smiling. "He will come when the storm is over. But hush, Auntie!" with a look of warning; "don't tell the General!" A moment's

pause. "You saw the letter, Auntie," whispered Rosie, making a feeble motion towards her bosom; "the note which he sent me the night he went away?"

"Yes, Rosie, I saw it," said Aunt Sadie, miserably.

"He loves me, Auntie."

Aunt Sadie did not reply in words, but she pressed the thin little hand against her cheek in an agony of grief.

"Where is Myrtle?" whispered Rosie.

"Here I am, Rosie," cried Myrtle, throwing herself down beside the bed in a burst of grief. "Dear, dear Rosie, I am here."

"Kiss me!" said Rosie, smiling.

Her eyes remained fixed upon the weeping girl and slowly but surely she was sinking away, when Aunt Sadie again bent over her. Once more she rallied.

"Don't cry, Auntie," she said. "I'm not afraid." A pause. "Auntie, do you know whom I think God is like? Like Myrtle's papa! Yes, I've always thought Him like Myrtle's papa ever since I was a wee little girl, because one night when I was staying with you I saw Myrtle saying her prayers, kneeling at his knee and looking up at him. Ever since then, whenever I thought of God, I thought of Myrtle's papa, and whenever I saw Myrtle's papa I thought of God. And so I'm not afraid," she concluded, smiling brightly.

"Her mind is wonderfully clear, Doctor," whispered Aunt Sadie, hopefully. "Isn't that a good sign?"

"She is dying, Sadie," replied Doctor Fairfield, gravely.

"Oh, I cannot believe it!" cried Aunt Sadie, with a fresh outburst of grief. "Winfield—General, *do,* do something!"

"Dear Sadie!" said Winfield, more moved than words can tell by the strange fancy of the dying girl.

"Auntie." Aunt Sadie bent down in deep anxiety. The end had come. Rosie could scarcely breathe. The girls fell on their knees around the bed and sobbed despairingly. Mam Sue burst into a wail which echoed through the house, and from below was answered by a mournful howl from Carlo. The storm raged with unabating fury.

"Rosie! Rosie!" cried Aunt Sadie, sobbing and trembling violently. "Rosie! Rosie!"

Rosie's eyes grew larger and, smiling, she whispered one word: "Elmer!"

Aunt Sadie covered the little hand with kisses and called her again in frantic entreaty. Rosie was gasping for breath. Her fingers closed convulsively around Aunt Sadie's. Her lips moved and in her wide staring eyes there came a look of tenderness beautiful to see. Aunt Sadie bent low, still kissing the hand and sobbing.

"Tell—him—when—he—comes—I—love—him."

And with those words upon her lips she died. Aunt Sadie threw herself upon the bed in a passion of grief.

"Oh, my child! my child! my pretty little Rosie! Oh, God, how could you, how could you!"

Winfield, kneeling beside his sister, tried to comfort her, but she would not be comforted.

"Oh! she was good, Winfield. She did not deserve to die," she cried out in violent grief. "Oh, God, how could you! How could you!"

"Sadie, dear heart, listen to me," implored Winfield.

Tears were running down his cheeks. The General's head was bowed upon the bed beside Aunt Sadie. Mam Sue had thrown herself flat upon the floor, where she groveled with Benjamin. The girls around her were crying bitterly.

Outside Carlo howled dismally, and the storm abating its fury, settled gradually into a lingering, long-drawn, steady and refreshing rain.

* * * * * *

Carlo howled through the night and far into the morning, which dawned a dark, murky, disagreeable leaden hue, enveloping the town like a pall. It rained by fits and starts all the morning, sometimes gently, sometimes in heavy showers. Grief-stricken, that small group remains around the pitiful little corpse, whose wax-like countenance after death has taken on a look of smiling tranquility, beautiful to see.

Turn we from this scene of sorrow to a scene more bright and gay.

The fashionable church, whereof the Rev. Mortimer Ringrose is the pastor, radiates with festivity. There is to be a wedding, a fashionable wedding at which His Reverence is to officiate in all the glory and sanctity of his office. The church is prettily decorated within and without. The walls are hung with laurel, the great lobby transformed into a bower of roses, whose heavy fragrance filled the air. Behold, the throng waiting eagerly, craning to catch the first glimpse of the bride. Behold, the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose, book in hand, standing in readiness. The great doors swing wide, and the bride enters, a radiant vision in pure white, leaning on her proud father's arm, and attended by her bridesmaids. The groom awaits her at the altar. The party proceeds slowly up the aisle, approaching the minister, before whom the happy pair meet, to the gasping delight of the crowd. A hush succeeds the tumult created by the rustling of silks and satins, and trampling feet and whispering voices, a solemn hush, and then the grand roll of the organ fills the church with melody. Again, a hush! And now the voice of the minister strikes unctuously upon the ear.

"There are three epoch-making periods in life—birth, marriage, and death. The years following the first are the years of childhood, happy, care-free, joyous childhood, which is but a prelude to the second period of life, that of glorious man and womanhood, which begins with marriage. The second period is filled with care and fraught with heavy responsibilities, for it is the period of pro-creation, and preparation for the final period and the glories of the life to come. Happy the man, happy the woman who enters upon this period of life with a grave sense of the duties devolving upon them in it, who with hearts united in mutual love, join hands in holy wedlock and humbly prepare to share all that life may hold for them in the future. The responsibilities will be great, but if lovingly shared, they will be easily borne, and that happiness shall be twofold in which two loving hearts participate. A marriage is a union of two souls. Whether good shall result from such union or ill, dwells wholly with those entering into it. With minds pure and hearts mutually trusting, with souls

at peace with God, and a firm resolution to faithfully keep the vows made that day, they could boldly face the future and with smiling lips begin the new life.

"Happy, happy couple! All that beauty, all that virtue, all that love can give, is yours. The world lies before you. Life, beautiful life is now opening to your eyes. Surrounded by loving and devoted friends, you are this day united in holy wedlock. You begin the journey of life under the most favorable auspices, with mutual joy, mutual rapture, and mutual tenderness in your hearts; virtue crowned and glorious in your innocence and chastity, you now join hands and promise to love, to honor, and to abide each unto the other until death do you part. Your position in life will be very high. Your responsibilities will be very great. The world will look to you for precept and example, and with that consciousness in your hearts you will be upheld in spirit and made strong and powerful by the God who looks down upon you and blesses you this day."

Thus spake His Reverence, in a touching little discourse delivered to the Hammersmiths, the Rochesters, the Markhams, the Thompsons, and people of lesser note or less pretensions.

"Human Nature," as His Reverence said in conclusion, "is prone to error, for Human Nature is weak, and the errors arising out of this deplorable weakness should be forgiven and forgotten by the wife and by the husband. There is nothing so sweet in life, nothing so pleasing, nothing so beautiful, as mutual forbearance. How happy, how joyful, how beautiful life would be if instead of blaming each other, we would lay the blame where it belongs, upon poor Human Nature! Oh, my friends, be forbearing, be considerate, and kind, and forgiving! The dangers and temptations, the snares that beset us in this life, are not of our own making, not of our own choosing, not of our designing; and if, in the weakness of erring Human Nature, we should slip and fall, be not hard, but forbearing, and life will flow smoothly on to the end."

How beautiful! How eloquent! How touching, and best of all, how true! Thus murmured the Hammersmiths, the Rochesters, the Markhams, the Thompsons, and the

people of lesser note or less pretensions. How inconceivably handsome and saint-like His Reverence looked as he delivered these touching sentiments! Such fire! Such ecstasy! Such grace of gesture! An angel, saint and minister in one.

But hush! The solemn ceremony has begun. Breathless interest. Some women begin to cry and a general sniveling ensues, as His Reverence in a solemn and impressive manner pronounces them man and wife. And now, with upraised hands and eyes and a faltering voice, he calls down the blessing of heaven upon their union.

Happy, happy pair! Envious eyes follow the newly wedded couple as the party slowly passes down the broad aisle, and out of the great doors. In a trice the church is empty, and the impatient throng hurries through the dripping streets in the wake of the newly wedded pair, for there was to be a grand wedding breakfast at the home of the bride, with music and dancing to follow.

Mr. Marblemore looks supremely happy as he stands in the great drawing-room, receiving the congratulations of his friends. His hope of many years was realized. He had long ago reasoned away all qualms of conscience. He deeply regretted the absence of his friends, the Wattersons; however, he could not allow their disapproval to stand in the way of his long-cherished hopes. The boy had been a villain—yes, but what he had done had been done before his reform, and like other offenses of those wild days ought to be forgiven. He must go abroad for a year or so, and when he returned the thing would be forgotten. As for the girl, his victim, she should be well provided for. He would fill her lap with gold; she should live like a princess, and, living thus in luxury and ease, she would soon forget her present misery and be very happy.

Musing thus inwardly, the banker received the congratulations of his guests with a smiling countenance. The minister's hand he pressed with uncommon warmth. Mr. Ringrose arrived inmaculate as usual, and smiling a gentle pastoral smile, he went around shaking hands assiduously.

Many guests were in attendance though fewer far than the banker had looked for. Hundreds of invitations had been

sent out and declined. Still, looking around about him, Mr. Marblemore saw no reason for complaint. The church that morning had been crowded to the doors by the curious, and over half a hundred guests had flocked to the mansion to partake in company of the bridal feast. The men looked sheepish enough in very truth for there were scarce half a dozen women in rebellious attendance upon their lords, but they shook their smiling host by the hand with every outward evidence of cordiality. They valued the mighty banker's goodwill too highly to risk incurring his enmity by showing a too fine sense of morality at this crisis. So while hundreds had adhered rigidly to the ban pronounced against his son, these timid among their brethren had come crawling to the banker's feet.

Mrs. Marblemore was above stairs with the bride, but she came down presently and mingled with her guests. She met the minister with cool composure and left him with one word of greeting. She caught the fond glance of her husband across the room and smiled to see his happiness. His eyes constantly sought the door as if he were impatiently awaiting some one. Mary, guessing his thoughts hastened away and presently returned with Clara, at sight of whom the father came forward with both hands outstretched.

"How proud she is," murmured Mrs. Thompson, who strongly disapproved the bride's icy demeanor. Never through the ordeal had she broken her cold reserve by so much as a smile. But now, as her father bent down to kiss her, she suddenly melted into tears, and throwing her arms around his neck, she cried bitterly with her head resting on his shoulder.

"Dear Clara," said Mr. Marblemore, tenderly. "What, so happy, my love, so happy? Here, Mary, take her up stairs. Come, child, compose yourself and prepare to grace the wedding feast like my own strong, brave girl."

Mrs. Marblemore lead the weeping girl away and Elmer followed them up stairs, having some orders to give Jacques, his servant, before sitting down to the festival. Mr. Marblemore, turning from the bride to his guests became suddenly aware of a strange commotion among them.

The women were standing in a cluster whispering eagerly; the men looked oddly ill at ease. The confusion increased. One woman, then another took her departure. Others followed and presently men and women were running about in a state of disorder bordering upon panic.

"What's the matter?" asked the astonished banker.

For some time no one made answer. The confusion had become a rout. The guests were rushing pell mell from the room and from the house.

"What does this mean?" again asked Mr. Marblemore, halting Mr. Ringrose who was passing hurriedly, looking pale and agitated. The minister paused and in a stammering incoherent fashion communicated the sad intelligence of Rosie's death. The banker's cheeks took on a leaden hue. "Why, it's impossible," he cried, dismayed beyond all telling, "utterly impossible."

"It is true, Brother Marblemore. She died last night. Aunt Sadie was there and Mr. Watterson. Dr. Fairfield was called hurriedly."

"My God! how terrible," cried the banker, utterly distraught. "Poor little thing! Dead! How awful!"

Elmer entering the bride's chamber above stairs to escort her to the festal board found his mother alone with Clara, weeping bitter tears of woe.

"What is the matter?" he asked, looking at Clara, who stood dry-eyed and pale behind the mother's chair.

"Rosie is dead," cried Mrs. Marblemore, weeping hysterically.

He leaned weakly against the wall, meeting her accusing eye with a look of horror.

"She died last night," continued his mother. "Oh, if I had only known in time! Nothing good will come of this marriage! Oh, Elmer, my son, why, why, why, didn't you listen to me?"

"Be quiet, Mama," cried Elmer, sharply. "She would have died if she had never seen me. Come, Clara, let us go down."

"The guests are all gone," said Mrs. Marblemore.

"Then get ready and let us get away from this hole. Clara, are you coming? Your father is waiting below."

"Yes—yes," said Clara, rousing herself. She had stood like a statue throughout this scene; but now she hurriedly went about her preparations for departure. "Help me, Mama, Papa is waiting for us."

Mr. Marblemore came to meet them at the foot of the stairway in the wide hall.

"Did you hear, Clara," he said huskily.

"Yes."

"And—you are going?"

"Yes."

She looked cold and little moved standing there waiting the announcement of the carriage. Elmer joined them presently, and after kissing her father once again, and submitting to Mrs. Marblemore's embrace, she placed her hand upon her husband's arm, and together they went out, got into the carriage and drove away.

There was no rice thrown after the departing couple, but a shower of bricks and stones greeted the carriage on its appearance in the street, and loud shouts of execration sped it on its way.

CHAPTER XLIII.

IN WHICH THE GENERAL ABDICATES.

The Chronicle was dead. General Hamilton sat in his office holding the last number of the famous old journal in his hand, musing sadly on the past. He was ruined. Every dollar of the fortune made in the earlier more prosperous days was gone. Nothing at all remained. The office building, his home, everything was heavily mortgaged, and the mortgages were in the hands of his most implacable enemy. Notice of foreclosure had come the day before and two lines in the Chronicle had announced its demise. But the General as he sat in the old chair, at the old desk, a sad and dejected figure, thought not of his ruin and poverty. The death of his much loved journal it was that cut him to the heart. He had served the public through a quarter of a century, served it nobly, faithfully, and now in his old age that public had deserted him. He had fought corruption, fraud, rascality, he had given of his best always, but all to no avail. Never had he considered personal consequences when the weal of the public was in question. His thunders had penetrated far beyond his home town, frightening rascals and driving them to cover. In the earlier, more turbulent days of his career, he had been waylaid, shot at, stabbed in the dark, but he had continued in his course with dogged resolution. And this was the end! The General sighed, musing thus inwardly and laying aside the dear old paper, rose and slowly paced the room. What would his contemporaries say? Nothing to wound him he was sure. They loved the old man, though editorially they had waged incessant warfare through the years. "The Rebel" would be missed and mourned. There was balm in that thought. The General smiled with a flash of recurring delight as he recalled his hard fought battles, in the past; his victories; his triumphs; the thundering discussions he had waged with half a dozen young rivals at once. Never, he was pleased to think

had he had the worst of it. He had forced the surrender of one and all. His theories, his opinions, his rejoinders, and witty repartee, had awakened wide-spread interest, and never had failed of the attention they merited. But those dear old days were gone—the days when an editor wrote with a pistol lying within easy reach, when his very life often-times depended upon his quickness of hand. Gone to return no more.

The General sighed. Those days were gone by, but he survived a relic of the past. What should he do now? How gain a living for himself and those dependent upon him? Go out into the world once more a free lance Journalist as of old? Alas! Who would accept his services now? He was old, his methods antiquated; he could not bend his proud head to the yoke.

"Nevah while I live will I stoop to the methods now in vogue," muttered the old man.

The sound of hasty footsteps in the outer office roused him from his reverie. The next moment Mr. Watterson entered, with a copy of the Chronicle in his hand.

"What is this, General?" said the big man. "The Chronicle to become extinct? Impossible!"

"Yes, Majah," said the General sadly, "the old papah is done fo', suh."

"Why, how can that be; are you tired of work, old friend?"

"I am ruined, Majah; I cannot carry on the old jo'nal any longah."

"Tell me about it, General," said Mr. Watterson, sitting down beside his friend. "Come, General, tell me."

"Tha'h is little to tell, suh. The papah has been falling behind steadily. It has not paid expenses fo' years. I have kept it up at great cost, and now—in short, I am ruined, Majah. The building is mo'gaged, my home also, the mo'gages are due in a very few days, and Ma'blemo' holds them."

"Why did you allow things to run on in this way, General?" said Mr. Watterson, reproachfully. "Have you no friends?"

"Friendship, suh, is sacred. Had I tu'ned to my friends

in my difficulty, suh, they would no longah be my friends, but my credito's, and I prefu' them among my enemies, suh."

"But surely General, you should not have scrupled to come to me. However, it is not yet too late. Something can be done, no doubt?"

"Nothing shall be done, Majah," said the General stiffly. "Ma'blemo' holds the mo'gages, suh," he added as if that were all-sufficient.

"But Marblemore can be made to surrender them," said the Major, good-humoredly.

"No, Majah, my work is done."

"Then doubtless you mean to return to Virginia?"

"Eh!" said the General looking up quickly, "what did you say, Majah?"

"I said that you must return to your estate in Virginia, General," said Mr. Watterson rubbing his hands together and laughing in enjoyment of the General's astonishment.

"My—estate—in—Vu'ginia—suh?" replied General Hamilton, speaking very slowly, "and pray what do you know of my estate in Virginia?"

"I know General that you have an estate there. I know that the estate in the very best condition is awaiting you now."

The General stared at him in a bewildered way.

"I know that all you have to do is to return and take possession of your heritage," continued Mr. Watterson, smiling. "It is a magnificent estate, General. Our boy, who has been over every foot of it, is most enthusiastic about it. Now listen, old friend, and I'll tell you the story. I own I did not think of the possibility of your having possessions in the South until Sadie gave me an inkling of the truth. Our boy long ago informed us of the difficulties you were laboring under here, and in talking the matter over with Sadie, she spoke of the estate you had left behind in Virginia quite as if it were a matter of common knowledge. When the thing had once been suggested to me, I thought of a thousand things to bear out the possibility that you had in very truth left such possessions behind in coming North to me. Indeed, in telling of the ruin and havoc wrought in the South by the war in the early days, you often alluded to

the wasted condition in which you found your property, but I never thought you guilty—pardon me General—of the madness of turning your back upon that property, A practical man, General," said Mr. Watterson severely, "would have realized as much as possible on such property, and—"

"What, suh? Sell my ancestral estate!" cried the General hotly. "Majah, you insult me! Ba'ter the lands which my ancesto's held fo' two hundahd years?"

"Sentimental nonsense, General, I assure you," said Mr. Watterson. "However, that is neither here nor there. When upon Sadie's suggestion, I had reasoned the thing out to my own satisfaction, I determined to investigate, and so I wrote to Mr. Curtis, my brother-in-law, who, as you know, is a resident of Maryland, who put me in touch with a firm of lawyers. They informed me very shortly that the old Hamilton estate was intact, in the hands of a certain Mainard—Lawrence H. Mainard."

"My cousin, Majah," said General Hamilton with emotion. "My cousin on my mothah's side, who was too young to take an active pa't in the wah. The Maina'ds, suh, are among the oldest families in the South. My mothah was descended in a straight line from Majah Maina'd who as a gentleman volunteer, assisted General Wolf in the sto'ming of Quebec. General Maina'd second in command to General Jackson at the battle of New Orleans was my matu'nal grandfathah, sah."

"A noble and warlike ancestry, General," said Mr. Watterson. "But if all the Mainards were as honorable as the gentleman now bearing the name, they had more reason to pride themselves on their purity of character than on the blueness of their blood. I do not value ancestry a jot, General," continued Mr. Watterson throwing himself back in his chair, and assuming his most arrogant manner, sitting with his thumbs in the arm-pits of his waistcoat and his fingers gently drumming on his breast—his invariable attitude when he wished to provoke his choleric old friend. "If you will permit me, I will prove to you that a man's ancestry—"

"A man's ancestry, suh," interrupted the General hotly, "is a critu'ion by which—"

"Is no criterion at all," said Mr. Watterson in his loudest tones. "A man's ancestors may have been hanged—"

"Then you may be shu' that the man will follow in tha'h footsteps, suh," cried the General. "Do you mean to assu't, suh—assu't to me, suh, that a man who can trace his name back a hundahd—a thousand years—a name suh, made honohable and distinguished fo' worth, suh, and valo'h by all who bo'h it—that such a name, suh, is not to be mo' proudly bawn by its possessoh than the insignificant cognomen bestowed upon a clodpated fool, suh, to distinguish him from othah fools, who have no grandsiahs, suh, and nevah had! Do you mean to make such an assu'tion to me, suh?"

"Just so, General," said Mr. Watterson, firmly. "Just so."

"Majah, you will oblige me by quitting my presence, suh," said the General in disgusted tones. "I'll cut yo' acquaintance, suh, upon the honoh of a gentleman!"

"The survival of the fittest, General," began Mr. Watterson firmly," shows that—"

"Damn the su'vival of the fittest, suh," cried the General now thoroughly exasperated. "Quit my presence, suh, instantly."

"Not yet, General. We will if you please, postpone this discussion to a more fitting time and place," said Mr. Watterson majestically. "I have not yet finished my story."

The General turned to him again, smoothing his rugged brow.

"Go on, Majah," he said.

"This Mr. Mainard who believed you dead, no sooner heard the contrary than he offered instantly to place the estate in your hands. My lawyers were surprised, and I must confess that I too was surprised, for I had not expected to regain possession of a property so vast which had been in the gentleman's hands so long, without a struggle."

"A Maina'd, suh," said the General stiffly, "would sco'n to do anything which would reflect upon his honoh, suh."

"So it seems; but if you will pardon me General, that

is rather owing to the gentleman's personal integrity than to the name he bears, or to his ancestors."

"I deny it, suh," said the General stoutly. "I uttahly deny it, Majah!"

"Well, be that as it may, the estate is now at your service or disposal. Not only is the property preserved in its entirety, but it is restored to its original prosperous state. Mr. Mainard has, on the chance of your return, kept an accurate account of the income of the estate through all these years, and of the cost in restoring and maintaining it."

"That, suh, I do not believe," said the General with dignity. "No Maina'd would think of rendo'ing an account of anything to a Hamilton suh, and no Hamilton would think of demanding such an accounting of a Maina'd, suh."

"Well, as a matter of fact, this was rather an inference drawn by my lawyers, than an absolute statement by Mr. Mainard."

"I can well believe that, suh," said the General haughtily.

"Sherman, General, was entertained in the most hospitable manner by the Mainards."

"The hospitality of a Southern gentleman, suh," declared the General arrogantly, "is provu'bial."

"You are incorrigible, General," said Mr. Watterson, smiling broadly. "That is all."

"All," said the General, pressing his friend's hand with deep emotion. "All! Majah you have given me new life! I have those depending upon me, suh, faithful friends in exile, who with me will weep tears of joy when they heah of this. I own to you, Majah, that I have mo' than once thought of retu'ning to my beloved Vu'ginia, but I was withheld by feelings which I cannot put into words.

"But you will return now, General?"

"Yes, suh; not as a claimant, however. The property shall remain in Cousin Maina'd's hands. I will but ask enough to maintain myself and su'vants fo' the brief space of life yet allotted me. Mr. Maina'd has a family, suh?"

"Yes, General."

"Has he a son, suh?"

"Four of them General, and three girls; all very young

as yet. The eldest boy is named Hamilton Mainard."

"Thank God! And with what family did Cousin Maina'd ally himself? I presume, Majah, that the boy paid no heed to this impo'tant question."

"No, Sherman is too sensible a young fellow to bother with such nonsense. However, I learned from my lawyers that his wife was the only daughter of Colonel George Strathmore, an officer who served with great distinction during the Mexican War."

"Strathmo'—Strathmo'!" mused the General with a profoundly abstracted air. "Tha'h are the Gawgia Strathmo's and the Mississippi branch both descended in a straight line from Randolph Strathmo' who emigrated in sixteen ninety-fo' from Yo'kshiah. Good old English stock, Majah—the ve'y best blood in England! Cha'les Strathmo' fo'th of the line took pa't in that disastrous expedition against Quebec undertaken by A'nold the traitor, suh, and tha'by brought down upon his head the wrath of his venerable fathah, suh, old Dominick Strathmo' who throughout the wah of the Revolution remained faithful to Britain rendering her every aid in his powah. At the close of the wah, he sailed fo' England wha'h he p'oposed tha'haftah to reside, and nevah was hu'd of again. His brig went down, suh, with all on bo'd, it was gen'ally believed. Cha'les had two sons and one daughtah—Vu'ginia. How well I remembah that glo'ious beauty, suh! She married young Carroll of Maryland—one of the Carrolls of Carrollton, grandson of the signah of the Declaration of Independence. Cha'les's second son, Washington, married a Lee—a Vu'ginia Lee, Majah, and with her emigrated to the State of Mississippi in twenty-fo'. Gawge, the eldah, entered into an alliance with the daughtah of old Gena'l Hammond of Bu'mingham, State of Alabama. She married him, Majah, when he was lying at the point of death, from a wound which he received at a meeting with young Mo'timo' Duncan, suh, of Richmond, his bittah rival in the affections of the young lady. She married Strathmo' and nussed him back to health once mo'—a noble, generous true-ha'hted Dixie lass, suh! Now, with which branch, Majah, did Cousin Maina'd ally himself?"

"With the Georgia branch, General."

"Ah!" the General smiled and tugged delightedly at his imperial. "A noble alliance truly, Majah!"

"True, but if you will pardon me, General," replied Mr. Watterson with the most elaborate politeness; "I will demonstrate beyond the peradventure of a doubt that a name is in itself of little worth or importance—"

"Not a wo'd, suh," cried the General wringing his friend's hand. "I cannot quaw'el with you now, and I know that you are trying to involve me in a quaw'el, in odah to conceal yo' noble work, Majah. Suh, I thank you. I would not have believed this mo'ning, suh, that life held so much joy in sto' fo' me. To die in my deah Vu'ginia has been my earnest wish throughout my exile. That wish, pray God, will now be realized."

"But not for a good many years yet, General," said Mr. Watterson heartily. "We'll spend many a day together yet, old friend, and I am very sure before the end, to convert you to my way of thinking on this all-important question of the "Survival of the fittest." Mr. Mainard was with difficulty restrained from coming here when he learned of your presence, but when I represented to him your stubbornness—yes, your stubbornness of spirit which would not allow you to give up the paper as long as you had a dollar in the world, and told him how near the end of your resources you were, he agreed with me that it would be best to keep you in ignorance until the Chronicle was utterly dead and done for."

"Majah, I thank you."

"Now let us go home General, to Sadie, who is anxiously awaiting your decision. She hopes ardently that you will remain with us as our guest General, always. She does not think it possible that you can find it in your heart to leave us after all these years. I would add my word to hers, old friend, but I know how useless it would be."

The General did not reply, but placing his arm in that of his friend, they went out into the street together and walking slowly and in complete silence, made their way homeward. The General's head was bowed in thought. He did not mark the curious glances cast at him by the people whom they met. The news of the Chronicle's extinction had

already gone forth, and in the glances cast at him compassion blended with admiration. Aunt Sadie was waiting for them in the parlor. She came forward eagerly to meet her friend.

"Winfield has told me all, General," she said in that liquid voice whose tones melted so sweetly on the ear, "but I cannot congratulate you, for I know we shall lose you now; and we have been such friends, General; have we not Winfield?"

"Dear Mistress Sadie," said the General, bending reverently over her hand.

"Will you not stay with us, General?" said Aunt Sadie eagerly. "We are your real friends, General. We love you dearly. Your relatives in the South, however good and kind, are almost unknown to you. They will not love you—they cannot cherish you as we would do, Winfield and I."

"It is not my relatives, dear Madam," said the General gently. "It is the land that draws me—my native Southland."

"And we must lose you?" said Aunt Sadie. "Winfield, can you say nothing to keep him with us?"

"He will come to us often, Sadie," said Winfield. "And it may be that we shall be nearer to him in the future. His estate lies very near to Washington."

"Mistress Sadie," said the General gravely, "many years ago when I came to you ruined, friendless and almost broken-ha'hted you gave to me the priceless boon of yo' friendship; and through all these years you have remained my constant friend."

"Who would not, General?" said Aunt Sadie weeping. "Who would not love him, Winfield?"

"Once I cherished a hope that that friendship would ripen into a deepah feeling fo' me. You nevah pu'mitted me to express that hope in words. When I sought to speak you told me the story of Mary's love fo' Doctah Maxwell, and thus, with the utmost sweetness and delicacy you made plain to me the futility of hope on my paht; and so I have nevah spoken what has been in my ha'ht; but now and here in the presence of yo' brothah, I shall speak. I am old now, old and wo'n, a battahed wreck, but I have fo' many years en-

tertained a deep regard fo' you. You have asked me to remain with you, to spend my declining years beneath yo' roof. I will do so on one condition, Madam—that you give yo' hand to me in marriage. On this condition will I stay and not otha'wise. Only the pride and happiness of calling you wife even in the winter of my life, will compensate me fo' the loss of my native Southland."

Aunt Sadie sat pale and breathless, looking up at him as he stood a gallant old man before her, with his eyes very tender now and moist with emotion looking into hers. Slowly the tears welled up into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. She opened her lips to speak, but only an indistinct murmur of "General" came from them; and covering her face with her hands, she fell to crying silently.

"I have my answer, Madam," said the General, gently. "Mary will continue faithful to the good Doctah."

"It—it cannot be otherwise, General," replied Aunt Sadie, beseechingly.

"It is what I expected," said the gallant old man, kissing her hand.

"Dear General," cried Aunt Sadie, rising eagerly, "must you indeed go?"

"Yes."

For one moment Aunt Sadie stood silently regarding him, with one hand pressing his arm.

"General," she then said softly. "If—if I could recall that time, knowing what I know now, my answer would be different."

"Oh, Madam! You heah her, Majah!"

"Do not misunderstand me, General," said Aunt Sadie, coloring faintly. "Whatever might have been, it is too late now. Only I could not let you go from me without confessing this. My memory is as vivid now as ever, but side by side with the image of my girlhood lover, you, General, have always stood—shall always stand. I know now that I might still have cherished this memory and in all things have proved a true wife to you, but at that time I thought—I thought differently."

Her voice faltered and she ceased speaking, and clasping his hands, she gazed at him in silence through swimming

tears. The General tried to speak but his emotion was too great for words. Once more he bowed over her hand and hastily went away. Aunt Sadie buried her face on her brother's breast and gave way to tears.

"Don't cry, Sadie," said Winfield, deeply moved. "It is all for the best. No doubt it is all for the best; but I am glad, my gentle sister, that you told him that—very glad."

General Hamilton, placing his affairs into Mr. Watterson's hands, remained only long enough to exchange letters with his cousin, then went away, taking with him his faithful servants and Carlo. The extinction of the old paper created quite a stir in newspaper circles, but the criticisms awakened by its career were for the most part friendly. The Chronicle and its editor were forgotten after a while, and things went on just the same. Mr. Watterson looking into his old friend's affairs, found that he had indeed wasted all his substance on the paper. Going to Marblemore in the hope of reaching a settlement favorable to his friend, the banker expressed his purpose in few words.

"I shall destroy the presses," he said, "and raze the buildings to the ground."

And the haughty banker kept his word.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

For full two years the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose had reigned supreme in the gentle bosom of the female half of his congregation; in a single month he fell from his high estate, became a mere man, where before he had been a saint, an angel and a martyr. The movement started slowly enough. Coming from the Marblemore wedding, Mrs. Hammersmith, shocked by the news of little Rosie's death, and seeking a vent for her indignation, spoke wrathfully of His Reverence, declaring that if he had not sanctioned the marriage, she would never have lent the light of her countenance to what was nothing more or less than a crime. Mrs. Thompson, equally chagrined and remorseful, answered in kind, and out of this little seed grew the popular sentiment against him.

For, eager to clear themselves in the eyes of their neighbors, these amiable ladies spoke everywhere in terms of the severest censure of Mr. Ringrose. They declared that in marrying Elmer, whose treachery had killed little Rosie, he was guilty of a flagrant outrage against society and the church. Other ladies who had been present on that occasion followed Mrs. Hammersmith's lead, and His Reverence was made their scapegoat. His action was discussed with eagerness at the club, and when once his name had come to be bandied about in unhallowed gossip, there was no length to which his detractors would not go.

The good sisters had long before this marked the Watterson pew destitute of worshippers; they had observed that Mrs. Marblemore seldom attended divine service now, coming only on those rare Sundays which her husband spent at home. Not these alone. Many others had left. Quite a number attended divine worship under Mr. Traviston, a stern, cold, severe preacher and strict moralist. Not a few remained at home on Sundays. These matters coming by slow degrees home to the minds of the good sisters, had

already begun to cause some wonder, some doubt, a vague feeling of uneasiness, when Mrs. Hammersmith's determined attack crystallized the wavering sentiment into a firm conviction that His Reverence was but mortal, and no better than he should be.

"Why," said Sister Thompson addressing Sister Watterson, "why do you no longer come to our church, Sadie?"

"Because," replied that stately lady, "because I no longer find there what I go to church in search of."

"And what is that my sweet Sadie?"

"That I must leave you to discover Mrs. Thompson."

But others were more outspoken. Mr. Ringrose's sermons were a mere series of inane rhapsodies, they declared, a beautiful flow of rhetoric without thought or depth or feeling. There was no originality of ideas, no religious enthusiasm, nothing but words nicely arranged and prettily delivered. The discussions raged fiercely for a time, for there were many who in blissful self-complacency warmly defended their minister from these attacks, and indignantly refuted the charges made against His Reverence, of a lack of zeal, and fire, and force. It was a shame they said that a man so pure and good and holy should be used so; but the malcontents prevailed in the end, as they always do, and the good sisters sorrowfully owned that His Reverence was not what they had thought him. He was a good man no doubt. A man so handsome could not but be good, but he was only a man. The glamour was gone. Their idol's feet were feet of clay, and though his head was as the head of an angel, its beauty was forever marred in their eyes.

Things would not have been so bad for His Reverence even at this pass if the good sisters had been content to let matters rest there, for he might have continued in possession of his lucrative pastorate for years, or at least until a constantly dwindling congregation made a change imperative, but the gossip-loving sisters were by no means disposed to rest upon their laurels. Having weighed and judged the minister, they now sought to measure the man. He became the main topic of conversation at social gatherings, at the club or wherever two or more sisters happened to meet. His actions from the day of his arrival among them were re-

called and adjudged, from the standpoint from which they now saw him. His name came to be mentioned in tones of disparagement. Mrs. Delaware had never thought much of him. Mrs. Bennett had absolutely declared him inferior to good Brother Winslow. Mrs. Miller thought him rather handsome, but Mrs. Greenwood considered it wrong for a minister to pride himself on his looks. Mrs. Hammersmith hinted drolly that there was more behind that scandalous episode in his early life than was generally known, and Mrs. Brownlow thanked Heaven that she had had little to do with him.

Viewed in this new light, the ladies began to see much more than had been apparent before. They began to watch his movements and speculate upon them. It was Mrs. Hammersmith who made the astounding discovery of his daily visits to Mrs. Rosewood. The widow lived alone now with only a vagrant boy as servant, shunned and abhorred by her neighbors as an unnatural mother, and an intemperate, vicious woman. That His Reverence should be seen going in and out of the little cottage at all hours, was not only an offense to the good sisters, but a suspicious circumstance in itself. So at least these ladies concluded, having arrived at a pass where the man's every action was colored by prejudice. Mrs. Hammersmith once timed his stay, which endured upon that occasion for three long hours, to that lady's great triumph and horror. Mrs. Delaware passing when His Reverence was known to be with the widow had heard Mrs. Rosewood's voice raised to quite an uncalled for pitch.

"She seemed to be very angry," said Mrs. Delaware, in recounting the incident to the horrified Mrs. Hammersmith. "She was scolding I know. She quite shrieked," added Mrs. Delaware, triumphantly.

All this, as you may imagine, created great excitement and scandal, Never had the meetings of the Clarenceburg Woman's League been so lively or so interesting. Mrs. Miller it was said, had seen His Reverence going into the little cottage late at night. Various ladies had encountered Mrs. Rosewood at various times and places, who in angry tones had demanded Mr. Ringrose's whereabouts.

"Quite as if she owned him," said Mrs. Lawler, with a look of delighted dismay.

In a word, things went from bad to worse. A great storm was gathering about His Reverence's ears.

Naturally a man so watchful and observant as Mr. Ringrose noted the general disturbance around him, the dark glances, the constrained bearing and cold demeanor of all whom he approached.

He followed step by step the deterioration of his cherished popularity. He was worried by the general coldness, but when to that coldness was added persecution, he put on the air of the martyr that had always stood him in such good stead. He said nothing, however, to defend himself until his name came to be linked with that of the boycotted widow, then he raised his voice in protestation. He expressed great horror; he wept with grief; he called upon high Heaven to witness his innocence. He felt sorry for the poor woman in her loneliness and despair. She was alone, friendless, deserted by all, and if her pastor deserted her likewise, where would she turn for consolation?

It was in this way that he met the reproaches of the good sisters, his friends, and supporters, a meager dozen or so among two score of bitter enemies, but however loud his protestations, however pious his glance and fervid his voice, he could not silence the babbling tongues around him.

It was somewhat past noon on that momentous day when Mr. Ringrose, walking slowly with drooping head and dejected countenance turned in toward the little white house in which Mrs. Rosewood dwelt. He quickened his steps as he turned off the street, and cast a furtive glance behind him. Across the street he saw Mrs. Hammersmith and Mrs. Thompson going towards the club. They were looking straight at him. His Reverence shuddered for well he knew the poisonous tinge of Mrs. Hammersmith's tongue, and from Mrs. Rosewood, he had learned of that half hour preceding the meeting, devoted by the members of the League to the flaying of their neighbors. But he went on nevertheless; for he was in truth utterly helpless in the widow's power.

Mrs. Rosewood once his dupe, had now become his

Nemesis. She demanded his presence every day at such and such an hour, and if he failed to appear, she was out looking for him in the street, at the church, at the parsonage, at the very doors of her neighbors, asking for him and demanding to see His Reverence at once. She was utterly shameless. She was the terror of his life. The scenes that were of almost daily occurrence between them beggar description. He wept tears of rage and shame at the thought of his impending downfall. Was it for this that he had striven might and main? For this that he had fawned and flattered, and cringed and wheedled and played the hypocrite? That the very tool which he had first made use of should be the means of ruining him, filled him with a terrible rage. He tried to reason with the woman, but all in vain. In vain he pleaded, in vain he stormed and threatened. She laughed and defied him. He was growing desperate by this continued persecution.

He met the little woman now with a scowl of rage and hatred.

"This thing has got to stop," he said, confronting her with a pale, set face. "I will not endure this persecution any longer."

"You have said that before," she sneered.

He stood before her, immaculate in irreproachable attire, a well preserved man of forty. She a woman of scarce that age, was horrible in her ugliness. She was fat and blowsy, and no longer clean. Her face was red, coarse and repelling, and stamped with every evil passion of her nature —a very virago in aspect, without a single redeeming feature. Within a comparatively short period of eighteen months, she had been plump and pretty, an attractive woman, taking a fine pride in the appearance she presented to the world, clean, neat and tidy, and not unhappy. The alteration wrought by all-consuming unchastity and raging jealousy was amazing.

"You have said that before, Your Reverence," she repeated, as he stood looking down at her in a kind of horror. She wagged her head from side to side, leering at him out of her little black eyes. She had taken to drink of late, to drown out her misery, and she had been drinking

that day. "You will come whenever I say so, and as often as I please," she said.

"Why do you use me so, Rose?"

"Ask your dear Sister Marblemore," she replied, sullenly.

"How often shall I tell you that there is nothing between us?"

"And how often shall I tell you that I wouldn't believe you on oath? Didn't I often see you looking at each other? You go to see her."

"I go to see many people," he said, stroking his silky black mustache, with fingers that trembled. "It's a shame for you to use me so. What have I done to you?"

"What have you done?" she screamed. "You have made me what I am. Before you came I was innocent. I was! I was! I was not unhappy. I had friends. I was not despised, shunned, pointed out by everyone. Look at me now," she continued, becoming more violent still. "Who knows me? Who will speak to me? Why, even Aunt Sadie shuns me. Aunt Sadie whom I have known to visit women as low—as low—as low as I am now. I have seen her from my window walking past out there, crying and looking in, but she could not bring herself to come in to me. Oh, my God! My God!" she sank back into the chair and burst into a passion of tears and sobbed with a shuddering, awful intensity that shook her like a jelly. "Even *she* will not come near me! And she does not know half! Not half! If she knew what I am!"

She rose unsteadily and staggered into an adjoining room, from whence came the sound of clinking glasses.

"And what I am you made me," she said, returning to the parlor with a countenance newly inflamed.

"You owe it to your own passion and intemperance," he replied. "How can you blame me for your lack of friends, when you know you brought it on yourself by your cruel and unnatural treatment of your daughter. You drove her out in her utmost need. And," he added, bitterly, "she was no worse than you."

"You remind me of that! *You!*" she shrieked out, mad with fury. "You—you brute! You coward! You

wretch! Ah, but I'll fix you! I'll go into the street and tell your dear sisters what kind of a man you are. I'll cry it out so that all may hear. I'll show you up, my fine preacher. You'd better pack your traps and make ready to leave this town for I'll make it too hot to hold you. Go on, get out, I'm done with you."

Without a word in reply, he took up his hat and went out.

She looked after him in astonishment, not dreaming that he would dare to take her at her word; but after a moment she followed, and going to the foot of the lawn, stood watching him as he walked away, utterly regardless of her dishevelled appearance and the glances of passing people. The minister walked with quick strides, going townward like one with a definite purpose in view. The woman watching him closely saw him turn in toward the Marblemore mansion. She uttered a half inarticulate cry of rage, and hastening back into the house she called upon the vagrant boy, her servant, to follow.

CHAPTER XLV.

IN WHICH THE GREAT MARBLEMORE GLORIES IN HIS GREATNESS.

"It's as true as I'm sitting here," cried Mrs. Hammersmith, rocking violently to and fro, the center of an eager group of women, her friends and fellow members of the League. "We came right up behind him, and I says to Mrs. Thompson, says I, 'I'll bet he's going in to see Mrs. Rosewood,' and sure enough, he'd no sooner reached the house when he turned in, looking around first like this——" and Mrs. Hammersmith cast an eager, fearful glance over her shoulder, by way of illustration, "to make sure he wasn't seen, but me and Mrs. Thompson saw him from across the street."

Lady members aghast!

"How very terrible!" cried Mrs. Bull, shuddering virtuously.

"And him a minister, too!" cried Mrs. Miller, indignantly.

"I never would have thought it in the world. Never!" said Mrs. Traviston, in a tone of resignation.

"Ladies, ladies," cried Mrs. Templeton, coming in hurriedly at this moment, accompanied by Mrs. Parmalee. "What do you think we saw coming down, Gertie and I?"

"What? What?" cried the ladies, eagerly.

"We saw him coming out," interrupted Mrs. Parmalee, excitedly.

"Who? Who?"

"Mr. Ringrose," cried Mrs. Templeton.

"Coming out of Mrs. Rosewood's," shrieked Mrs. Parmalee.

"And she was following him—" screamed Mrs. Templeton.

"He looked as pale as a ghost," shrieked Mrs. Parmalee.

"And she was *that* angry!"

"She stood away out on the sidewalk looking after him."

"And you ought to have seen her dress!"

"She'd been drinking, too!"

"She quite staggered!"

Thus alternately shrieking, the joyous pair poured forth their little budget to the intense excitement of their eager listeners. The news was eagerly debated, and the minister denounced by the indignant dames in unmeasured terms, and but for another item of news brought by the fortunate Mrs. Templeton, it might have resulted in some definite action on the part of the League, for already Mrs. Delaware had drawn around her several of the more sedate and heads were coming together in deep confabulation, when Mrs. Templeton launched a bomb, which all suddenly turned the gossip into another channel.

"What do you think, ladies," she cried, "the Marblemores are going away for good! Yes! Next Tuesday night after election. Going to New York to live. I had it from Mrs. Marblemore's own lips."

Mrs. Hammersmith wouldn't believe it. Mrs. Delaware thought it too good to be true. Mrs. Sawyer lamented loudly, and the others joined in the discussion with considerable heat and ardor. They still were battling eagerly when Aunt Sadie arrived, who forthwith was drawn into this interesting disquisition on Mary's merits and defects. Aunt Sadie, of course, defended her friend; but only half-heartedly. The news was crushing to a woman of her tender disposition. This sudden loss of friends so near and dear to her overwhelmed her with sorrow. Only the other day the good General had gone away, and now Mary and Andrew would quickly follow. It was with a heavy heart that she went through her duties as chairman of that august body, and, as early as possible she adjourned the meeting, whose dull routine, always distasteful to her, was doubly so beneath this burden of doubt and uncertainty as to how much was true of the report. She went direct from the clubroom to the Marblemore bank and was promptly ushered into the banker's private office by the smiling Johnson. The ordinary rules of exclusion did not

apply to her; and so, though Mr. Marblemore was not alone, the deferential secretary bowed the good lady into the great man's presence with all the assurance in the world. The banker, looking unusually glossy in a suit of black broadcloth, a snowy shirtfront, high collar, and broad black tie, sat leaning far back in his chair, with one well shod foot thrown across his leg and his thumbs thrust in the armpits of his vest, his great red face beamed with good humor. Opposite him sat Farraday, journalist and correspondent, negligently nursing his knee, smiling slightly, with his flashing glasses turned in full upon the banker, whom he was interviewing for his paper.

Both men sprang to their feet at Aunt Sadie's entrance, both placed their chairs at her service, the journalist bowing with the ease and grace of one accustomed by long usage to the ways of polite society. The banker held out both hands to the flurried lady, who inclined her head in gentle greeting to Farraday, whom she knew but slightly, as a very persistent visitor of her brother.

"Is it true, Andrew?" she said, sitting down on a third chair, which Johnson had brought in. "Is it true, as the ladies were saying at the club this evening, that you are going to New York to stay?"

"Yes, Sadie," replied Mr. Marblemore, smiling. "It is true."

"Going for good, Andrew? Oh, it is impossible!"

"Such is my purpose, Sadie."

"Dear, dear, how terrible. First the dear General leaves us, and now you and Mary! Oh, Andrew, how can you have the heart to leave us?" said Aunt Sadie, who loved her friends dearly one and all, and felt towards Mary as a sister.

"It can't be helped, my dear Sadie. I am absolutely required there."

"I am so sorry. But when do you go?"

"Early next week."

"And isn't Mary terribly distressed? Dear, dear, I must call in and see her."

"Do, Sadie. She is considerably wrought up, but not distressed, I fancy. Rather the reverse, indeed. But go

and see her by all means, and stay until I come. I won't be long now, and then we'll send for Winfield and Myrtle and we'll all dine together."

"So we will, Andrew," said Aunt Sadie, rising. "I have a call or two to make and then I'll come."

She bowed once more to Farraday, and went out, the banker accompanying her to the outer door.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Marblemore, resuming his former position of negligent ease. "This city has become too small for me. Entirely too small."

"So I should have thought," remarked Farraday, "going to New York, eh? Quite a village, they tell me. Intend to make it your permanent headquarters?"

"Yes, I am required there. I should be there now."

"Not afraid of going to the other extreme, eh?" queried Farraday, lightly. "Clarenceburg too small; New York too—eh?"

"No, sir, no," said the banker pompously important. "No danger of that at all."

"Ah! You see I was thinking of how the frog from the puddle felt when he emigrated to the pond."

"I should have gone long ago, but I could not bear to leave this dear old town. I have spent all my life here; here I got my start. In this little office I thought out my campaigns. Some of the most far-reaching schemes were matured here; and all were directed from this place. But I can stay no longer without seriously injuring my various enterprises. Sentiment has no place in business. Modern business demands concentration, and untiring, unceasing devotion. That is what I gave to it through thirty years."

"Just so," murmured Farraday, with difficulty suppressing a yawn. He was down for election which was but two or three days distant, and had dropped in on the banker on the chance of picking up an interesting item or two, rather than with any definite intention of publishing his views. He hated platitudes, however, and moral maxims, and the above sounded to the experienced reporter like a prelude to the usual harangue on honesty, industry, perseverance, and the rest of it, which the modern business man preaches so glibly, but rarely practises. "Supposing we be-

gin at the beginning, Mr. Marblemore. Tell us about your start."

"My start," replied the banker, with a laugh. "Well, thirty years ago, more or less, I came to town, a raw country youth, with nothing but an enormous pair of boots and the clothes I stood up in. I remember I had twenty cents in money in my pocket, that was all. I had worked on the surrounding farms all my life and knew nothing but farm work. And there I was with twenty cents in my pocket and my two hands to work with. And in the country my sweetheart was waiting patiently for me. I was ambitious, however, and determined to succeed. It was a struggle, however, a hard struggle."

Farraday grunted. Might polish the thing up for the Sunday magazine, but for plain, every day reading it was really too prosaic.

"I went to Mr. Watterson—" Farraday suddenly sat up with an air of interest—"who just then had assumed control of the broom works, bearing his name. I asked for employment and I obtained it. I remained with Mr. Watterson five years, at the end of which time, I had become superintendent of the concern under my employer. How? By hard work and strict attention to business. My employer saw that I devoted all my energies to furthering his interests, that I made his business mine, and he rewarded me by giving me one place of trust after another, as I proved myself capable of filling them. I worked days and studied nights, and in odd hours dabbled in mechanical experiments. I have always been of a mechanical turn of mind. I early saw much room for improvement in the machinery then used in broom making. I invented several little things, small in themselves, but great enough in the aggregate to revolutionize the methods of broom manufacture then in vogue. My appreciative employer adopted them. More! He helped me to push them in the market and I soon derived a snug income from my inventions, and, as I was very saving, I had at the end of five years a sum of money that was large for those times. With this money and again with Mr. Watterson's assistance, I established this bank."

He paused for a moment as if in excess of emotion. Even in the midst of his self-complacency the mention of his benefactor's name moved him deeply.

"With Mr. Watterson's assistance, eh?" queried Farraday, ruminatively.

"Yes. Without Winfield's help, I would have had to wait three, perhaps five years longer, and time was then as now my most valuable asset. I established this bank—"

"Still of an inventive bent of mind, sir?" asked Farraday. In his mind's eye he saw the double-page story he would make of these meagre details, and the illustrations to accompany and elaborate it. There was Marblemore the raw-boned farm boy in huge boots and rough working clothes, appealing to Watterson, the young business man, for work to keep himself from starving. Watterson benevolently extending aid; farm boy toiling, bent double over intricate machinery; Watterson benevolent and kindly always, assisting ambitious boy; farm boy's rise; Watterson's entrance into politics; farm boy opens bank; Watterson magnificently assisting with sundry bags of gold; farm boy's gradual rise to business eminence; Watterson's growth and greatness in politics. Culminating glory: Watterson United States Senator from Illinois; farm boy multi-millionaire, and foremost financier of the age. Pictures of factory, work-shop, bank, mansion, Watterson's homestead, U. S. Senate chamber, New York offices to accompany the whole. Farraday's eyes sparkled. Great!

"Oh, yes. I'm still of an inventive turn of mind," replied the banker, smiling.

"And your secret of success?" asked Farraday, absently.

"The secret of success in the business I have chosen, I figured was not to rely upon my own resources only, but to interest moneyed men in my schemes, and, by acquiring their confidence, gain control of large sums of money to carry them on. If I had relied solely upon the few paltry thousands that I possessed, I would have advanced but little beyond my starting point. I saw around me men who were deemed wealthy—this one with ten thousand dollars—that one with twenty—another with fifty—and so on. It was my business to obtain their confidence, and this I did with ease.

They placed themselves and their fortunes unreservedly in my hands, when I had succeeded in proving to them that my schemes, though far-reaching and in a way venturesome, were sound at bottom. With the revenues of war in my possession it was necessary to get possession of another commodity—brains—with which to work. This was a task more difficult. The antiquated business methods of those days had developed a race of business men who were incapable of doing the work I required. Davidson, for instance, is worth his weight in gold, properly controlled and directed, a man among a thousand, incapable of conceiving anything himself, but capable of carrying out the most gigantic schemes when controlled and directed by another man. But men of Davidson's calibre were rare in those days."

He paused to shake his head, with reminiscent sadness, smiling indulgently at the old-fogyism of those days. Farraday nodded comprehendingly and smiled encouragingly.

"In the course of time I did discover several men, who, with the requisite training, were fitted for my purpose," resumed the banker, "and then I was ready to begin operations. I looked far into the future, studying the conditions of the country, measuring its probable growth in population and increase in wealth, and I laid my plans accordingly. Believing in the development of the West, I invested heavily in Western lands, which were then dirt cheap, and in railroads newly building. By means of my holdings in railroads I was able to enormously increase the value of the lands I held, by establishing stations near them and encouraging immigration and the building of towns. I was fortunate in various mining ventures and in small railroad speculations and enterprises of various kinds. I established many banks in this State in the meantime, with other people's money chiefly, and controlled them all from my headquarters here. I interested myself in many widely differing lines of business, and, believing thoroughly in modern business methods, I did away with the old-fashioned system everywhere, and always to my advantage. I organized concerns of magnitude into stock companies, formed combinations of competing lines of business, working always to gain

a monopoly of a given line. I succeeded in launching several corporations that now embrace the entire country, doing business in every State. All this required time, of course, many years indeed, and much labor and worry, but at the end of fifteen years I had pretty well succeeded in my purposes."

Thus with a word he dismissed the awful cares and responsibilities that had rested upon his broad shoulders during those years. They had been very heavy—so heavy at times and harrassing, that he had on one or two well-remembered occasions shut himself up in his shop at home, dismissing all business from his mind for days at a stretch, purely to save himself from mental wreck.

"At the end of fifteen years," the banker continued, "the greatest problem of all confronted me; that was how to reinvest the income and accruing profits of my many enterprises. The money came in in a perfect stream, faster than I could find relieving avenues for it. I became interested in eastern railroads, in shipping, in telegraph and telephone lines, coal, oil, steel, stone, lumber, grain,—in anything and everything, in a word, that offered a reasonably safe investment. But still and all the money came streaming in, an ever increasing torrent, and all that saved me from being swamped was the banks I had established and the connections they gave me with banks in neighboring states and the larger commercial centers of the country. And so it went on. The few thousands I had started out with became millions, and the ball is still rolling and gaining momentum with every forward bound."

He paused again and sat for a space in silence, gazing through the wide window up at the court-house clock.

"My success, my boy, was due to foresight, to courage and ceaseless endeavor," he pursued. "Work is a lever that will move worlds. Work wisely, and with method. Depend upon yourself, but employ the brains of others. I am not through yet. I have much work to do. I have attained an eminence, it is true, from whence I can look down on the struggling horde, but I have by no means attained my aim. I am near the goal, and in a few years' time will stand upon the summit and look down upon the whole world, and those

who now regard me as an adventurer who has risen to fortune and eminence by a series of lucky strokes, will learn to know me for what I am."

He rose to all his burly height, and stretched forth his arm in triumph, as if already the world was at his feet, and he its master. Farraday smiled indulgently.

"And now for a word or two of counsel to ambitious youngsters," he said, grinning in anticipation of what was coming.

"Well," replied the banker, musing, "I would advise close application, because that is an absolute essential to success in any vocation. He should love his work, else he can't interest himself sufficiently in it to make it go. That I think is self-evident, or should be. If he doesn't love the business he's in, let him get out of it and try another. Everyone is peculiarly fitted for some one thing. It may be law, medicine, preaching, or business; as there are many branches of business, he should study himself and see in which direction his inclination guides him. It may lead him to become a banker, or a merchant; if the former, he'll manage to establish himself somehow or other; if his instincts incline to the latter, he'll start out with a pack on his back, and, by putting his whole soul into it, keeping a sharp lookout far ahead, and seizing opportunities and advantages as they rise, he's bound to succeed."

"How about honesty, fair dealing, and so forth and so on, Mr. Marblemore? Are they not necessary to success?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Marblemore, indifferently. Johnson came in with a letter which he handed to his chief. "Yes, oh yes. Business honor is essential. One must meet one's obligations promptly, of course. As for fair dealing, that depends upon the point of view. We're all bandits preying upon our kind. If you, seeing an advantage ignore it because by reaping its benefits you are likely to injure Smith across the way, you are a fool. Smith wouldn't overlook it. Any one aiming at success in business must not be too squeamish, my boy."

"Good!" cried Farraday, rubbing his hands. Here was a man who spoke straight from the shoulder. He was about to continue his questioning, when he saw an awful change

come over the banker. He had opened the letter in a leisurely way while speaking, and glancing down at it when he had finished, he suddenly started to his feet, overturning the ponderous chair, and clutching at his throat. Farraday was startled.

"Damnation!" gasped the banker, staring down at the letter, which read as follows:

"Mr. Marblemore: You think Mr. Ringrose is your friend, but you are mistaken. You think your wife a model of purity and virtue, but you are wrong. They are friends; your wife and the preacher, ah, such friends. They are deceiving you, you fool! He visits her every day and has done so for months, spending hours with her. No doubt the time is spent piously, in prayer. He is with her now, this moment. Go home and you will find them together.—A Friend."

"Johnson," cried the banker, in tones of thunder.

Johnson came running in, pale and agitated. The men in the rear bent low over their ledgers.

"When did this letter come?" demanded Mr. Marblemore.

"A moment ago, sir."

"How? How? How?"

"A boy brought it, sir."

"Where is he?"

"I tried to detain him, sir, but he ran away as fast as he could, sir."

Without another word the banker rushed past him and out into the street. Farraday gazing after him in great astonishment, muttered one word.

"Mad!"

The cool autumn sun streamed down upon the banker's bald head, as he sped across the street, and across the courthouse lawn towards the corner of that street in which stood the gorgeous mansion he had erected as a monument to his greatness. People paused in the utmost astonishment to stare at the spectacle of the usually stiff and haughty banker hurrying hatless and almost on the run down the street. But he pushed on, noticing no one. He panted hard, for he was no longer slender or light of limb. His breath came in

gasps, but he went on, running a few steps now, now walking with enormous strides, until he reached his own lawn. Glancing up he saw Aunt Sadie just disappearing into the house. Pausing for a moment to recover his breath, he again looked down at the letter which he held crumpled in his hand. There could be no word of truth in it, for was not Aunt Sadie there? But Aunt Sadie, like himself, had just arrived! He hastened on, up the steps and through the front door, bursting upon the astonished servants, wild-eyed, purple and sweating with the heat and haste of unaccustomed running.

"Where is he?" he gasped.

The man stared.

"Ringrose? Is he here?"

Without a word the man pointed to the door of a room, whose threshold Aunt Sadie had just crossed. The banker plunged after her like a mad bull.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AN EXPLOSION.

Mr. Ringrose's face was pale and set as he walked away from the wretched woman's house. He was desperate. The end was at hand. Nothing now could save him. In those moments of fierce despair a great resolution formed itself in his mind. He determined to call upon Sister Marblemore and once for all resolve his doubts regarding her. In his heart there burned an unholy passion for that beautiful woman, a passion, the gratification of which he was unwilling to forego. In his desperation he resolved to venture all upon a cast of the die, and stand or fall, as fortune favored or frowned upon him. Would she be at home, he wondered? His visits to Sister Marblemore had been few and far between of late. Her manner had undergone a decided change toward him. She no longer met his eyes as formerly. She came rarely to church now, and always went away without greeting him. She was often away from home when he called. She was cold to him and distant when by chance they met. He remembered her former bearing, her glances of passion replying to his own, and her coldness now only added fuel to his passion. In the light of these early passages, he had little difficulty in construing her present attitude as favorable to him. She was weary of his fruitless pursuit. Women love bold men. They admire courage and despise cowards. She scorned his hesitation, and took this means of showing her contempt of a lover so timorous. Thus the man reasoned, and had reasoned long, without being able to summon the courage to do and dare, which sheer desperation gave to him now.

But would she be at home? Everything hinged upon her presence and willingness to see him, for he felt that never again would he feel the courage within him that swelled there now. The servant looked doubtful. She was at home, but she was preparing to go out. Time was when

he would not have hesitated, but he looked doubtful now. Would His Reverence step into the reception room? His Reverence followed the man not into the little chamber where she had always received him, but into a small drawing-room opening off the wide hallway to the left. The room was circular in form, being at the base of the tower. The windows were somewhat high placed, with wide embrasures, and small panes of glass fashioned so as to carry out the effect of an antique quaintness, in keeping with the tower. There were three in all; the one in the center looked out upon the side lawn, from whence His Reverence, as he stood beside it waiting, could see between the dark green fringe formed by a number of low growing evergreens, the upper windows of the neighboring mansion. The thick lace curtains were looped back and the window was opened a bit above and a bit below.

A half hour passed slowly away. Mr. Ringrose became impatient. Three-quarters had gone and His Reverence was on the point of summoning a servant, when he heard a rustling behind him. Turning quickly he beheld Mrs. Marblemore. She advanced a step or two, then paused as he approached. His eyes glowed. He was fairly astounded by the woman's beauty, which to his eyes was doubtless heightened by the passion that consumed him. She wore a loose, flowing gown of her favorite light blue color, which shimmered softly in the light. She did not smile as he advanced, though her lips twitched a little in a perfunctory way. Her eyes roved past him. She looked cold and distant. He pressed her hand with even more than usual unction, remarking upon the weather. The sight of her so cold and beautiful, almost deprived him of courage, but he was desperate. She motioned him to a chair, but herself remained standing, with the air of one who has little time to spare.

"I have come to remonstrate gently with you, Sister Marblemore," he said softly. "You are very seldom at church now, and we all miss you sadly."

He stroked his silky black beard with trembling fingers. She looked straight at him for a fleeting moment, her long eye-lashes trembling, then she turned away her eyes without a word.

"Why, Sister?" said the man, conveying all his passion into his eyes. "Why—Mary?"

It was the first time that he had ventured to address her thus since that awful hour of temptation. She looked at him again, but haughtily now and with indignation.

"I do not understand your—your manner, sir," she said, in a trembling voice.

"You do, Mary, you do," he cried, with a sudden outburst of passion. "Oh, you understand me well, Mary. Forgive me for hesitating so long. I should have been bolder I know. I don't blame you for despising my caution. But you are so beautiful in my eyes, and so highly placed that I felt humbled and afraid."

She did not melt nor cry out, nor sink into his arms as he had half-expected. On the contrary, she drew herself up and retreated a step or two as he advanced.

"Sir, I say again that I do not understand you," she said. "I do not desire to understand you. You had better go."

"No, Mary. I have not been blind to what your eyes have told me. I can see and read and comprehend, and I have seen that in yours which tells me that you love me as I love you. Let us go away together. You are unhappy here. I will make your future life happy. You love me, I know. I have seen it in your beautiful eyes often, very often, but I feared to speak. Who am I to aspire to you?"

"Mr. Ringrose," said Mary, drawing away from him with a shudder of strong repugnance. "I say again that you are in error." She was very pale and frightened, panting with terror, indeed, as she pressed against the wall, shrinking from his approach. She had long ago measured the man and she loathed him utterly now, but she could not shake off the haunting memory of her early infatuation. She could not forget her guilty thoughts of long ago, and she wished to shield this man, upon whom they had centered, from the consequences of this folly. "If you do not go, I shall call the servants," she said more firmly. "I do not understand a word you say. Let me be as if it had never been, only go at once!"

There was a narrow door within reach of her hand, towards which she turned as if to leave him.

"Stop, Mary!" cried His Reverence, agitatedly. "You cannot mean what you say. Are you afraid of him—your husband? You cannot mean, Mary, after what your eyes have told me, that you do not love me! You cannot possibly mean that."

The mention of her husband stirred in Mary the deepest indignation.

"Are you not ashamed to mention him?" she replied, turning upon him with a countenance flaming hot with anger. "It is the duty of one of your calling, sir, to set an example of virtue and rectitude. Instead, you are seeking to destroy it in those who ought to look to you for strength and guidance. I detest you! Your presence horrifies me! I ask you to go—now—at once!" she continued, with growing excitement, "I loath the sight of you. Ever since you came here, you have been trying to destroy my peace of mind using your sacred office to cloak your real designs, almost to my undoing. And he—my husband—your friend, who has done you nothing but kindness—*he* knows nothing. I have shielded you from his wrath for long, because of your calling, but if you do not go at once, I shall ring—let the consequences be what they may. Dear God!" she ended with a burst of violent sobbing, "that I should come to this. I!"

She stood before him with covered face weeping, a woman shamed, stricken to the heart by an overwhelming sense of degradation the consequence of her own mad folly and blindness. The minister almost stunned with surprise stood staring at her. He understood her now. She did not love him. She hated him. She had said so. Then what of those glances that had passed between them? What of those trembling sighs of long ago, those hand pressures which she had permitted him, and—aye, returned? What of them? Oh, fool, fool that he was! She had loved him then! Had he spoken then as boldly as now she would have been his! But he had let slip the opportunity in pure caution and timidity, and scorning his cowardice, she had learned to despise the wretch she could have loved! Fool that he was!

He pressed his hand to his brow in a fury of baffled passion. She had never looked so beautiful as in that moment of anger, shame and woe. He stood for one moment staring at her, passion raging in his heart, then forgetting all caution, he sprang forward and caught her in his arms.

"Mary, you cannot mean it," he cried desperately. "Listen to me, Mary! do, do listen!" for she was struggling madly to free herself from his encircling arms. "I was a fool, a coward not to speak and you are right to be angry with me; but down in your heart you love me, Mary. You do, you do! You are only angry and afraid, Mary, listen; I am going away for good and all—to-night—at once. I've got to go, Mary."

Utterly exhausted Mary ceased her struggles and for one moment lay helpless, almost fainting in his arms! And in that moment a cry rang through the room, a sort of choking gasp, and tearing herself free from his relaxing grasp, she turned and beheld Aunt Sadie standing there pale with horror, and behind Aunt Sadie—her husband! One glance she cast at them and fell swooning to the floor.

Mr. Marblemore had come plunging in behind Aunt Sadie in time to see it all, and the sight had nailed him to the spot. For one moment only, the banker remained inactive, motionless, stupefied almost, then crossed the room with a bound, leaping for the man with his enormous hands stretched out to grasp him, roaring like a mad man. Had he caught the preacher, he would have torn him limb from limb, for there was at the bottom of this man's nature a savagery like that of a gorilla, which terrible animal he indeed resembled in his burly frame, and never more so than in his headlong fury, as he came leaping for the minister.

Mr. Ringrose overwhelmed for the moment with surprise and fear, had remained rooted to the spot; but at sight of this furious animal approaching him, he gathered his scattered wits together, and turned to flee. The door opening into the hall was full of gaping servants; he had no time to reach the other door; the windows offered the only means of escape. He made for the one nearest him with all the speed that terror inspires, and leaping upon the broad sill, he plunged headforemost through, taking sash and all

with him in his fall. The crash of broken glass and wood was echoed by the cries of the frightened servants. The banker rushing for the minister brought up hard against the window sill, and remained for an instant staring stupefied at the ruin wrought by the fleeing man; then turned slowly as he stood, glaring around the room as if in search of some object upon which to wreak his rage. The servants vanished before the blasting fury of his glance.

He saw Aunt Sadie white and motionless reclining unconscious as she had fallen in a huge arm chair; he saw his wife lying almost at his feet with face all pale and eyes open, staring up at him in speechless terror. He bent over her in that gorilla-like attitude with his clinched hands stretched out behind him, and stared down into her eyes for moments. She shrank from his glance, cowering against the wall.

"Get up," he said, in a scarcely audible vioce.

She obeyed him, rising slowly and with difficulty, for she trembled in every limb.

"Go to your room," he said in the same voice.

She went away, passing with bowed head through the door nearest her. He remained staring at the door through which she had vanished, for almost a minute when a trembling sigh recalled his attention to Aunt Sadie. He hastened to her side and kneeling down began to chafe her hands.

"Sadie! Sadie!" he called.

She sighed again and opened her eyes and stared at him for the space of half a minute, in gathering surprise. But it all came back to her at once and with a heart breaking cry of woe, she covered her face with her hands.

"Hush!" he said, gently; "don't cry over it. See Sadie, I do not cry."

"Why do you say that, Andrew?" cried Aunt Sadie, rising eagerly. "Why *should* you say that?" she repeated, tremblingly.

He turned away his head with a bitter smile.

"Oh, Andrew, you cannot believe Mary guilty of wrong? Surely, surely, Andrew, you cannot but believe Mary—our Mary innocent?"

She stood all pale and trembling, pleading eagerly for a word to reassure her doubting heart. But no word came and she sank back in the chair with a cry that pierced his tortured heart.

"Do you remember years ago, Sadie, the cruel deception she practiced upon Sherman?" said Mr. Marblemore heavily. "If she was capable then of that, she is not incapable of worse."

"Andrew, did you see the look on her face? Oh, I am sure she is innocent! There is something here that we do not understand. Do not accuse her Andrew. Think! she is your wife! she loves you dearly."

"She does not—she never loved me!" cried the husband fiercely. "Never! never! Although I thought, of late—God help me!—I thought—but that is over now. Remember your boy, Sadie."

"Andrew," said Aunt Sadie resolutely, "let us go to her. Come; she can explain this terrible mistake."

"No; there is no mistake," he replied huskily. "Did you not see her in the man's arms? Can you imagine a man entering another man's house and embracing his wife unless much has gone before? Bah! I can understand it all now, her sweetness to me of late, her smiles and kisses! It was to conceal her guilt with this man that she tried to cajole me with a show of tenderness."

"Oh is it possible that after years of love and devotion, you can turn against her in a single moment, and believe her guilty of this awful thing?"

"You do not know, Sadie! She never cared for me. There have been no years of love and devotion. All was coldness and indifference until of late—I thought—I thought—"

He sank into a chair with a groan.

"Andrew, this thing is so terrible, so awful that you durst not judge her unheard. I will go to her, Andrew—"

"No, Sadie, I will not permit it. If she is innocent she will come to me. I will call the carriage, Sadie," and going out he gave the order and returned.

"Andrew, you—you will not be harsh or over-hasty,"

said Aunt Sadie imploringly. "Oh, I cannot, will not believe it."

"Do you know this writing, Sadie?" he asked, showing her the letter. "Read it." She did so slowly and painfully the while he stood regarding her with clenched hand. "Do you know the writing?" he asked again.

Aunt Sadie shook her head; but looking closely down, she had little difficulty in making out the name of Mrs. Rosewood, which had first been signed, then barely half erased, and the words, "A Friend," substituted.

"This was written by Mrs. Rosewood," she said looking up.

"It was brought to the bank. I was almost stunned when I read it. I came rushing home at once. It never occurred to me to doubt Mary, nor did I for one instant believe that the man whom I had treated as a friend and brother had entertained the thought of wronging me. But—but—I was enraged—maddened, that anyone should dare to speak of my wife in such terms. I wanted to see Mary in all her purity. I wanted to show her this note, and with her confront the author, whom I would have strangled with mighty little compunction. If I had found the man alone I would have ordered him from my house. I—I was enraged."

He broke off stammering, incoherent, sobbing, "I came in behind you, and saw her weeping in the man's arms."

"She can explain Andrew," said Aunt Sadie eagerly."

"She cannot. If she is innocent why did she not declare it?"

"An innocent woman would not protest, Andrew. It is only guilt that cries out upon detection."

"She fainted at sight of her outraged husband," he went on angrily, paying no heed to her words.

"An innocent woman placed in so horrible a position would naturally be overcome with shame and horror. Oh, Andrew, the more I think of it the more convinced I am that Mary is innocent!"

"Bah! Remember your boy, Sadie. But come, here is the carriage."

His stern demeanor precluded all further argument.

Aunt Sadie leaned heavily on his arm going out. The shock had been very great. The strong woman could hardly hold herself upright.

The sun was sinking in the West when he returned to the room. He gazed at it through the wreck of the window. He brought a chair, and mounting it, looked down below the window where the man must have fallen. The lawn was strewn with broken glass and the remnants of the sash, but the man had doubtless with that rare good fortune attending such villains escaped all injury. He took a turn or two through the room, with his hands clasped behind him and his head bowed upon his breast. Who can tell the thoughts seething through that mighty mind? Not I. They were very terrible without doubt, but very pitiful, too. He sighed once or twice heavily but checked the mournful sound with an angry scowl. He took up various pretty knick-knacks, Mary's treasures and gazed at them wistfully, then dashed them on the floor. He rang the bell, but dismissed the servant that answered it with an impatient wave of the hand. He strode through the room like an enraged lion, knocking the furniture about, but at last sank into a chair and bowing his head upon the table, he burst into a sobbing cry that shook his burly frame like a leaf.

Aunt Sadie went home from that awful scene with her nervous system completely shattered. She kept up for a week, striving by a vigorous fast to drive out the wasting fever that seemed to sear itself into her very brain, but on the morning of the eighth day, she felt too weak to rise and sending for her brother, she told him that she was in for a long illness.

"I fear it is brain fever, brother," she said.

Winfield knelt down beside the bed utterly distraught, and for a moment blinded by a rush of tears.

"Sadie, my Sadie," was all that he could say.

He kissed her hands and took her poor bursting head in his arms. For a long time he remained quite speechless, gazing imploringly into those dear eyes, which returned his gaze so tenderly but with a troubled anguish in their velvety depths which he understood only too well.

"You do not believe it, Winfield?" she whispered. "Oh, my Mary! So sweet, so beautiful and good! Oh, it cannot be true. I will never, never believe it. Say it is not true, Winfield."

"It is not true, Sadie, do not take it so to heart, dear Sadie. No doubt it can all be explained."

"My boy must not know of my sickness, Winfield. Oh, my head! Send for Doctor Fairfield, he knows my prejudices against medicines, and he will respect them. And Winfield," she added smiling a little shamefacedly, "if it is brain fever they may want to cut off my hair, and I should be *so* sorry to lose my beautiful hair, brother."

"They shall not touch it, Sadie."

"Not unless my life is endangered, and they must be very, very sure. Now, call Myrtle."

Fortunately, it was not brain fever at all, but a nervous prostration, which while not as violent in its action, was quite as dangerous and more lingering.

CHAPTER XLVII.

RETRIBUTION.

Mary went to her room at her husband's command, and sinking into a deep arm-chair, she remained for hours staring down at the carpet contemplating her ruin. The sun went down and dusk gave way to night, but still she sat there motionless. The officious maid, unable to rouse her mistress, went away at a late hour, and she was left alone in her sadness and ruin. She could not think. A kind of stupor had settled upon her brain. All the incidents of that awful hour were jumbled confusedly in her mind. But she vividly recalled her husband's terrible anger, and the recollection filled her with shuddering horror. She heard his footstep on the stairs, and she waited pale and trembling. He went into his room adjoining her chamber, and there she heard him walking with measured tread up and down, up and down, for hours and hours. Sometimes a sound as of a groan came to her. Again a deep sob followed by heart-breaking sighs, which wrung her heart with pity for him and anguish for his suffering. Oh, he had loved her deeply, truly! He had worshipped her with a passion that only mighty men can feel. And this was the end. He believed her guilty of this awful thing!

The noises in the street died out long after all sounds in the mansion had ceased. A deadly stupor seemed to envelope the town. Mary sat there without moving all that night. She heard the tread of her husband and marked the moments when he rested. She heard the town clock booming out the passing hours. She heard the barking of dogs around her, and the crowing of cocks in the distance as the night merged into morning. The first footfall in the street, the soft roll of the earliest passing vehicle came up to her, and then the re-awakening of the household.

Towards morning her head began to throb and her brain became clearer, and then she recalled with startling

distinctness the incidents of the preceding evening—the man's coming—his mad declaration—her scorn of him—his desperation—Aunt Sadie's scream and her husband's wild anger. She could trace every step leading to the terrible culmination. The man's eyes had fascinated her, had carried her out of herself. She had thought of him for weeks and months, had encouraged his advances, had listened to his veiled proposal, had even started to meet him, when opportunely turned aside from her mad purpose by the promptings of her better nature. She was not guilty save in thought and purpose. She had turned aside, though at a late hour. She was innocent then of actual wrong, but he — her husband — believed her guilty! She was not guilty. She repeated this over and over again as if to reassure her doubting heart. She was not guilty, no, but could she face her husband with this declaration upon her lips? She who had wronged him in her thoughts, who in design had betrayed and dishonored him? Could she go to him and say that she was innocent? She began to cry softly sitting there. She loved her husband now. She had begun to love him in that very hour of internal strife, and the love had grown upon her day by day. It was not an all-absorbing passion such as she had been capable of in her youth, but a deep, sincere affection, founded upon esteem that would endure through all her life.

Her happiness had been very great during the past few months. She had reveled in the new found joy of loving her husband. She was not a demonstrative woman, but she showed her tenderness in many ways. She had met him on his home-coming with smiling words, she had shown a deep interest in his vast projects. She had spent hours in the little shop upstairs with her husband, inquiring into the nature of the various inventions. She had talked with him and had charmed him with her sweet amiability. When he was away she had written long loving letters to him, and had followed his career with eagerness and joy. It was surprising how happy she had become in that short interval. And now all this was to end. He believed her guilty, would think her late tenderness nothing more than hypocritical blandishments to hide her evil intimacy with

the man she loathed! Oh, it was impossible! Oh, God! why could she not have been left to her happiness? She had erred, but she had repented in bitter grief and shame. Why could she not have been left undisturbed in her joy? Must every sin be paid for thus in anguish?

The morning was far advanced when she heard her husband's footstep approaching her door. He came in and she cast one swift glance at him, and was struck with grief and horror at the change in him. He seemed to have grown years older in that single night. His ruddy color was gone. He looked strangely haggard and shrunken and his cheeks were covered with a sickly leaden hue. She saw the alteration in one quick upward glance and her heart was struck with pity and remorse. She longed to throw herself at his feet and beg his forgiveness. He looked at her as he came in. Her attitude and pale, haggard aspect told him that she had not slept. He took a turn or two through the room before speaking.

"Have you not slept, Mary?" he said presently.

His voice was not unkind; his glance was wistful. She tried to answer him but felt a choking sensation in her throat. She slowly shook her head.

"That was bad," he said. "You should have gone to bed."

Tears came into Mary's eyes at his gentle tone. He walked up and down the room once or twice without speaking.

"Mary," he said, pausing at some distance from her. "I have been thinking all night trying to determine a course of action. I will tell you what I have resolved upon. If the man was unmarried I would free you, but he has a family and he could not provide for you. I have brought this on myself, I know. You told me very plainly before we married that you did not love me, but I was headstrong and would not heed my better judgment. It is a punishment. I should have thought, though, that after all these years—but let that pass. I know I am not a lovable man, and I was wrong to think that love would beget love in return when other qualities were lacking. This man's conduct, I cannot overlook. Considering his calling, my friendship

and his family, it was infamous. It is perhaps well that he escaped me last evening. I was upon reflection inclined to let him go, thinking that he was but a man, and that as such he would have been a fool to reject that which, no doubt, was freely offered him, but upon deeper reflection I have changed my mind. He must and shall be punished. I shall visit him presently and I shall take a horsewhip along."

He paused, glancing sharply at her, as if to mark the impression his purpose made. She showed strong agitation, but for a far deeper reason than he supposed. She was sitting in a strained attitude, staring down at the rug. Her cheeks were flushed and her bosom heaving. He turned away with a bitter little smile.

"The course I have determined on may not meet with your approbation, but, if so, you have an alternative," he resumed. "I shall not go to New York as I proposed, but shall remain here. I shall dismiss the servants, and take a small house near by—the smaller, the better. This mansion I shall raze to the ground. I will not leave one stone upon another and I will destroy everything in it. You shall have a taste of poverty, you shall be your own housekeeper, your own servant. That is how people lived in my younger days and wives were virtuous then. Riches and idleness have corrupted your morals, possibly a return to old conditions will restore that sense of right and wrong which you have to all appearances lost. I will share your labors, your company and your fare. We will face the world together and—and—and—"

He broke down completely here and leaned against the window sobbing with terrible intensity.

"Andrew! Husband!"

Mary started up pierced to the heart by his grief, and threw herself on her knees at his feet holding up her hands to him. He quelled his emotion by a powerful effort, and shrunk away from her.

"Sit down, Mary," he said sternly. She obeyed him, wringing her hands. "I have said that I will do this, but I need hardly tell a woman of your intelligence, that you are free to go or stay as you please. You can go away if you

desire and I will make suitable provision for you. What will you do? Go or stay?"

"I will stay," she replied, in a low voice.

He bowed and went away. She sank down on her knees and gave way to tears. But she was not wholly unhappy. She had feared that he would banish her from his sight, but this was not to be. She would stay by his side and earnestly strive to regain his esteem and love. She would await a favorable moment and confess all to him, make clear to him the extent of her guilt, and her real innocence. Thus she thought weeping. How noble he was! how good and kind! How considerate even in his scorn of her! He believed her guilty, yet he remained by her side, voluntarily facing the world with her hand in his, protecting her with his name and guarding her by his presence. She marveled how he could think her guilty of this awful thing, not thinking of the deception of long ago, which made this crime seem not only possible but in every degree probable.

"Send John to me," said Mr. Marblemore to a servant who answered his ring.

John, the coachman, presented himself very shortly in his master's room.

"Bring the carriage around, John."

"Yes, sir."

"And John—"

"Yes, sir."

"Take your heaviest horsewhip along. I shall need it."

He strode up and down the room with his hands clasped behind him while awaiting the carriage. Johnson was announced.

"Mr. Andrews is waiting at the bank, sir," he said. "Very important, he says."

"I can't come."

"He is very insistent, sir," said Johnson, with a little deprecating cough. "Davidson, too, is there and Demorest and Bentley and Montario and—meeting day, sir, of the directors—"

"I cannot come," the banker interrupted him harshly.

Johnson retreated with very great haste.

"Drive to Mr. Ringrose's house, John," said Mr. Marblemore as he got into the carriage.

People stared curiously after him as he rolled along. The servants had, of course, spread the astounding scandal all over town. There was quite a crowd gathered in front of the little white house in which Mrs. Rosewood dwelt.

"What is it, John?" asked the banker, looking up.

"The widow is dead, sir," replied John. "A boy found her this morning. Poisoned herself. Laudanum."

"Ah!"

He said no more and they went on quickly. John brought the carriage to a standstill in front of the parsonage and Mr. Marblemore got out.

"Give me the whip, John," he said, "and wait."

Mrs. Ringrose opened the door in answer to his ring. Her eyes were red with weeping. She started back upon beholding the stern face of the banker and tried to close the door but he put her aside, and strode past her into the house. He threw open the first door he came to which happened to be the minister's study; it was empty. He looked into the parlor, the sitting-room, the dining-room and kitchen—all empty. Mrs. Ringrose followed him about everywhere whimpering, poor little thing as she plucked at his sleeve and besought him tearfully to go away.

"Please go away, sir," she said weeping. "I'm afraid of you. Please go away."

He paid no attention to her plea, nor even noticed her. Finding all the rooms below empty, he went upstairs as inexorably as fate, the little woman following at his heels whimpering and imploring him to go away because she was afraid of him. He looked into one room after another and in the fourth, he came upon the children asleep. Even the sight of the little ones in their innocent slumbers did not turn him from his purpose, though he paused one moment to look down at them with a softening expression on his haggard face. The fifth door was locked, and he was obliged to burst it open, which he did by hurling himself against it with all the force of his burly body. It flew open with a crash and there was His Reverence sitting upright in bed. Softly he closed the door behind him, shutting

Mrs. Ringrose out and bolting it within. The little woman cried out in terror for she had caught a glimpse of her husband's white face. She fell upon the door with petty violence, belaboring it with her hands until they were bruised. She heard her husband's voice in accents of terror imploring mercy.

"Brother—Mr. Marblemore," the wretch stammered. "You cannot mean violence, sir. Remember my cloth, Brother—"

"Your cloth!" replied the banker, between set teeth. "Hah! Yes, I'll remember it. In this way."

There came a dreadful cutting sound followed by a cry of anguish, another and another, then a whole shower mingling with cries of pain and pleas for mercy. The little woman cried out and belabored the door furiously. She heard them running about, the one fleeing, the other pursuing. She heard the crash of falling furniture but always above every sound, mingling with her husband's cries, came the dreadful cut of the heavy whip wielded by a powerful arm and one that knew no mercy. The sounds of running ceased, the cries became fainter and died out but still the lash of the whip came out to her. And then all became quiet. The bolt was withdrawn and the door opened and Mr. Marblemore, panting and sweating, came out. The little woman darted past him and threw herself with a piercing cry upon an insensible mass lying motionless in one corner.

"Drive home, John," said Mr. Marblemore getting into the carriage. "Never mind the whip. It has answered its purpose and is useless now. Drive home."

John drove home and Mr. Marblemore, getting out, went into the house and going upstairs locked himself in his shop denying himself to all comers. And there he remained, not hours merely or days, but weeks and months pondering over his inventions. He took his meals there, for exercise he walked the length of the room, up and down, up and down, for hours. He slept in a room adjoining. He would see no one, neither Johnson, Davidson, Andrews, nor any of a score of business associates who all aghast and lost without the master mind to direct them, saw with anguish

and horror one vast project after another abandoned. Mr. Davidson was placed at the head of the bank, and seconded by Mr. Watterson, and ably assisted by the great banker's numerous lieutenants, he did his best to grapple with the gigantic affairs left undirected by the master's abrupt withdrawal.

Mary waited eagerly for the inauguration of those changes of which her husband had spoken, but days passed, weeks, months, and he made no sign. Things went on much the same in the great mansion. Master and mistress lived apart, rarely even seeing each other. Mary watched over her husband, though wholly unknown to him, and saw to it that all his material wants were supplied, and lived in hopes day by day of winning him back again.

Mrs. Rosewood's death was duly investigated.. The poison with which she had taken her life was proved to have been sold to her daughter Rosie, many months before. She was buried unregretted and was soon forgotten by all, or remembered only with the deepest loathing.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IN WHICH MR. SAGAMORE SCORES A VICTORY, AND EXPERIENCES A DEFEAT.

The Republican Campaign inaugurated at Chicago with a tremendous mass meeting, was carried on with a vigor, and an enthusiasm, that left nothing to be desired. Mr. Sagamore toured the State, speaking everywhere, and everywhere he met with that uproarious acclaim, that fervid adulation, so dear to the heart of the ambitious politician. Not Sagamore alone, but all the big leaders of the party were active. The organization was determined to recover the State to the Republican Party, and it put forth every energy to that end.

Things did not look favorable in the beginning.

Mr. Watterson's action in declining the nomination occasioned the keenest disappointment not only to his friends in Clarenceburg, and in the State, but throughout the country. His nomination would have strengthened the ticket immensely, and his election by throwing the Illinois electoral vote to the Republican Party, nationally would have made McKinley's election a practical certainty. As it was Sagamore was a bitter pill for Dillingham and the other leaders to swallow. With the State already in the hands of the enemy, and the silver movement seemingly growing in the popular favor, the closest accord was necessary to success. Mr. Watterson labored day and night to bring about a more cordial understanding between the candidate and leaders, and Sagamore by dint of certain concessions, and many glib promises, succeeded presently in establishing himself in the good graces of the various State leaders.

Mr. Watterson went to New York early in the campaign, and delivered several speeches in that city and in other Eastern cities, but he did not remain long away from his home State rightly believing that his presence within

that debatable territory, would be of more benefit to the national ticket than any amount of scattered effort.

Bryan's strength and popularity at this time were tremendous. In the East indeed his strength was nil, but in the West and middle western States, and in the South, he seemingly was making a winning fight. He attracted vast concourses of people everywhere, and the enthusiasm with which he was greeted bespoke a sure and certain success. There can hardly be any doubt I think that if the election had followed the Chicago Convention within thirty days Mr. Bryan would have been overwhelmingly victorious. But the educational campaign inaugurated by the Republicans wrought in time the downfall of this brilliant and vigorous leader.

On the night of election day Mr. Watterson sat in his office surrounded by his lieutenants, listening to the returns as they came in over the wire. Dillingham was there and Southgate, Brockington and a dozen other leaders. Farraday, as master of ceremonies, read aloud the reports of the various districts, and with really marvelous speed compared and compiled the accumulating figures.

"Cook County, Dick," said the journalist looking up from his note book, "will top the city by several thousand."

"Of course t'will," said Dillingham, rubbing his fat hands together in great glee. "I've been working, I have. We'll beat 'em by a hundred and fifty thousand, Scott."

"I hope so, Dick," replied Mr. Watterson absently.

He was thinking of Sadie, who was decidely unwell, though she had at this time not yet taken to her bed. He was a good deal worried, and, moreover, felt depressed and saddened by the thought of Mary and Andrew.

"We'll do it," continued Dick, "eh, Sagamore?"

"Things look very favorable, Dick," said Sagamore, coming over and looking down at the numerous scraps of paper spread upon the table in front of Dillingham. He looked calm enough on the surface, but he was in fact, deeply agitated. He could hardly conceal his exultation. His hand trembled as he took up the latest dispatch. "Things do look very favorable," he repeated returning to his chair beside Scott's desk.

"Favorable," echoed Dillingham disgusted. "Why you're elected, man. And Scott's Senator, eh, Scott?"

"Time enough for that, Dick," said Scott smiling a little.

"We'll make him Senator, won't we Dick?" said Southgate importantly.

"That's what we will, Eddie," cried Dick laughing uproariously.

The returns continued favorable beyond their most sanguine expectations. It was an hour past midnight when Farraday sank back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"You're elected, Sagamore," he said. "The other side has conceded as much. The *Courier*, I am informed, has an extra out now announcing your victory. All that remains is to ascertain the Republican majority. It is a landslide, embracing the entire country."

"Hurray!" roared Dillingham, and bounding up he seized Southgate in his arms and went waltzing about the room bellowing like a mad man.

"I want to be the first to congratulate you, John," said Mr. Watterson rising and holding out his hand.

The others crowded around tumultuously. Dillingham clapped him on the back with much warmth and vigor. Mr. Sagamore shook hands all round, standing upright, with a happy smile. The first step toward that goal to which he aspired was attained, and in the light of this victory, the rest seemed easy of accomplishment.

"Gentlemen," he said in a voice that trembled a little, "I thank you. My heart is too full to say more. I thank you."

"You will spend the remainder of the night with me, John?" said Mr. Watterson.

"Yes."

But they did not make their escape thus easily. Farraday always on the lookout for interesting matter for his paper, begged a word or two from each, expressive of their gratification over the victory, and their faith in the renewed confidence of the people. This detained them for some time. Then Delaware came in to announce a large delegation below eagerly awaiting Mr. Sagamore's appearance.

They went down, and Sagamore was kept busy shaking the hands of his friends and supporters. He made a short address, in which he gracefully expressed his thanks to them for their confidence and support, of which he promised to prove himself worthy in the future. It was close upon morning before they got away. Nevertheless, Mr. Watterson led his guest into his study.

"I have a bottle of excellent wine, John," he said, "which Sherman sent to me, and which we will drink to the victory. If you will excuse me a moment, I will unearth it."

He returned shortly, with the bottle and glasses. He was puffing and panting from the exertion, having seized the opportunity to run upstairs to inquire into Sadie's welfare. The news was reassuring.

"You're getting fat, Scott," said Sagamore jovially.

"Yes, I have been too closely confined to my desk the last few months," he replied.

He had not as usual, toured the State that year. He had started out, to be sure, but finding that he and not Sagamore was attracting the lion's share of attention, and not wishing in any way to detract from the candidate, he had good naturedly retired, leaving the field clear to Sagamore, and from his office he had conducted the campaign with his wonted skill and sagacity.

"Well, John," said Mr. Watterson with his pleasant smile, "you are now or soon will be Governor of this great commonwealth. Are you not proud?"

"I am, Scott."

"And contented?"

"No, not contented," said Sagamore energetically. "Not contented, Scott. I have advanced a step higher, that is all."

"Oh John, John," said the big man eyeing him sadly, "That measureless ambition of yours. It will—nay, it has ruined you."

"In what way, Scott?" asked Sagamore, holding up his glass to the light.

"It has taken possession of your entire being. It rules you; it colors all your actions; it has become your only

motive in life. To gratify it you would go very far. You are in a word, ambition's slave."

"Say it is so, Scott, why not? Why should I not be ruled by ambition? No man ever gained great heights, no man ever won great results, no man ever attained true greatness, who was not ruled by ambition."

"You are wrong, John. No man can attain true greatness, unless he rules the ambition, which he permits himself to cherish."

"I say that the man who is not ambitious in some direction is but little above the brute."

"All men have their ambitions, and it is well that we should be imbued with worthy aspirations, but we should not, I repeat, permit our ambition to rule us. We should not become its slave. I have warned you often, John to curb your bounding desires, but they seem to have grown upon you and—pardon me John—to have ruined that fine, noble manliness of yours of which you were ever so proud. I have long wished to speak to you of this, and I do not think I could find a better time than in this hour of victory. I no longer recognize in you that fiery youth of ten years ago, who would, and did dare all, even political death and oblivion, for the sake of honor and independence."

He spoke very slowly and gravely, and with an expression of deep sorrow on his fine countenance. Sagamore slowly sipped his wine.

"Am I so changed, Scott?" he asked.

"Yes, John; you are not the same. You have become a very astute politician, cold, cautious, calculating. But think, my lad, the victory which you have gained this day, you have won mainly on the strength and popularity you gained in the days of your independence."

"Am I less honest, Scott, less open, less bold, less brainy? Am I corrupt, dishonest? A bribe-taker, a coward?"

"No, you are none of those. Your personal integrity, your courage, your intellectual force are undoubted."

"Then in what am I changed?"

"In this John: that in the early days you were honest, bold, upright from innate manliness and zeal, for the sake

of right and justice; now you are all this for policy's sake. You measure all you do or say by the possible good or harm it may do you in the future. You are no less bold, but more cautious; no less zealous, but more wary, no less honest, but more calculating; basing all your actions upon your political aspirations, and judging all men and things by their power to further or retard your ambition. Forgive my candor, John. I love you. You are my political son, and I at one time entertained great hope of you. I am proud of you now, but not as proud as I would have been if in acquiring your political training, you had not ruined that firey purity which you had in the starting out."

He rose in great agitation and took a turn through the room, breathing deeply.

"The truth is, Scott, that I am now a practical politician, where I was formerly an innocent rustic running headlong against obstacles which my experience in politics has taught me can be gained in other and simpler ways. But I do not believe I have sacrificed a jot of the principle and manhood with which I started out."

"You are yourself unaware of it, John, because with your eyes persistently fixed upon the goal towards which you aspire, you lose sight of many things which I who know and love you, see quite clearly."

"Well, if I am the less a man because I am an abler politician, believe me Scott, it is because manhood and politics will not mingle."

"Not when ambition is the third and more powerful ingredient, John."

"Who the devil would go into politics save for ambition's sake?" said Sagamore with sudden irritation. "No one but a fanatic or a fool. Should I have been content to remain in the lower House at Springfield forever, fighting corruption, dishonesty and wrong merely for the sake of gaining a popularity which I could never use?"

"For the sake of the right, John! You might have risen to the highest honors in the land my son, fighting for the right."

"Without ambition?"

"No, ambition is essential to any rise, but should be kept subordinate to the right and gained through it."

"Scott, I am the same man I was in the beginning of my career. I have not gone down. My character is the same, my principles are the same. You simply judged me in those days to be better than I was. The work I did in the legislature was done partly in a spirit of fierce indignation against the corrupting influence at work there, but I'll tell you candidly Scott that I never for one instant lost sight of my own interests, which I knew would be immensely advanced by the stand I took there."

Perhaps the strong wine he had drunk, or the triumphant sense of the victory so recently won made him for the moment forget the caution into which he had schooled himself. He spoke clearly, smilingly, even flippantly, and sat regarding his friend's widening eyes, with a species of enjoyment.

"I am sorry you told me this, John," said Mr. Watterson slowly.

"Bah, Scott, men are not what you think them, nor will they be what you would have them, until human nature is changed for the better. No man's perfect. Even you, who are are the best man I know, are turning directly upon your own contention in yielding to your laudable ambition to enter the Senate."

"Not for ambition's sake, John—not solely for ambition's sake. There is work there for me to do. I might have been Senator ten—fifteen years ago."

"That is true. Well, Scott, I am sorry if you are disappointed in me," said Sagamore smiling, "but we must each work out his destiny in his own way. That is my theory. I shall try in my public duties to further public interests, but these interests will always be of secondary importance to me. And remember, Scott," he added in a voice vibrating with emotion, "in my rise I earnestly hope to take one with me whose purity of character may renew in mine that nobility whose loss you so deeply deplore."

Mr. Watterson sat down in deep dismay. He would fain have spared his friend the sorrow, his daughter the pain of another meeting, but he could do nothing. The

man must put the question, the maid must answer. There was no other way.

"Bye the bye, Scott," said Sagamore, placing his empty glass upon the table. "Why did you not go to the Senate twelve years ago? Why should you have made way for Traviston?"

"Senator Traviston was entitled to the honor by long and arduous services. I was not. Moreover, I did not consider myself qualified either by age or experience to fill so important a position."

"An odd notion, that, upon my word," said Sagamore frowning. "Quite primitive."

"Perhaps. Since that time I have added twelve years of work and study to my life, and believe now that I can fill a place in that august body."

"You are too diffident, Scott. Your mind would furnish forth a dozen like poor me, yet I would not—nay, I shall not hesitate to oust Traviston if later on I care to join you in the Senate. You are altogether too modest. I have heard that in your lawyer days you rarely lost a case."

"I *was* pretty successful," said Mr. Watterson, smiling with a charming air of complacency.

"I have heard too, from men who ought to know, that your knowledge of law, even now is absolutely phenomenal."

"Ha,ha, are you finding me out, John?" cried the big man throwing himself back in his chair with a great show of arrogance. "I have not entered court for twenty years, but with proper preparation, I could hold my own with any of you young fellows. Trust me John!"

"But what good does it all do you; that is what I am trying to get at?"

"Well, I keep in touch with all my brother lawyers, who are good enough to consult me on knotty points, and then I follow all the big legal battles, and in order to understand the fine points I've got to keep up my studies. It is a great pleasure to me."

"All useless, Scott; a waste of time. You should have gone into public life long ago."

"I see nothing to regret in having remained at home.

What is there in the political history of the past thirty years but tedious tariff tinkering, pension doctoring, and red tape quibblings, arising out of reconstruction problems? Necessary work, no doubt, but not, I imagine, very stimulating or attractive to men of mind."

"And what does the future promise to attract you?"

"Much, John, much! Cuba is knocking at our doors. She must be liberated, and liberated, moreover, without resorting to arms. War is a crime, a horrible crime. Then the great monopolies which overwhelm us must be curbed and regulated, and made to subserve the public good. And there is another thing to be done, John," continued Mr. Watterson, rising, and stretching forth his mighty arm. "We must give to our women the ballot, and enlist their earnest services in the many problems confronting this nation, by making them our equals before the State. You and I, John, will join hands on that issue."

"What!" cried Sagamore. "Are you a convert to Woman's Suffrage?"

"An enthusiastic recruit—yes. Are not you?"

"Bah! It is all nonsense."

Mr. Watterson paused, looking down at his friend. He, of course, knew of Myrtle's endeavors to convert Mr. Sagamore, and he had thought with Myrtle that he had been won to the Cause. The ardent girl had often talked of him to her father; she had read passages from his letters, conveying warm expressions of faith and loyalty to it. And now it appeared that all this was pure pretense and hypocrisy! The revelation of his friend's character, vouchsafed him within the hour, shocked and saddened him inexpressibly.

"Let us go to bed, John," he said, sadly. "It is late, and we have a hard day's work ahead of us. Come."

It was indeed late, but the newly elected Governor, sitting beside a window which faced the east, waiting for the slowly dawning day, spent the remainder of the night in weaving pleasant dreams of future triumph, and of future bliss, when, united to the woman he loved, he would reign the equal of kings and emperors. There had been almost no correspondence between him and Myrtle since their last meeting. One or two letters he had written while in the

thick of the political fight, but had received such brief, constrained replies that he had thought well to cease writing. He felt that in the new light in which his proposal placed him, the girl's constraint was wholly natural and charming. He augured well of it, and dwelt in anticipation on her sweet surrender when, victory-crowned, he came to her and asked her to share his glory. She was not like other women. She valued power and greatness above mere youth and beauty he was sure. She believed him to be a man of destiny—then why should she not desire to share that destiny with him? She looked up to him as the Moses who would lead the Cause of Woman out of the wilderness into the promised land of emancipation. Having the power to further the interests of that Cause, would not this fair enthusiast see in him the one man above all other men? His position as Governor of a great State was a high one; would not she be eager to share it with him? He believed so. He could not but believe so.

Nevertheless, his heart beat faster when he went down in the morning, for it is given to no man who truly loves a woman to approach that woman with a calmly beating heart, and Mr. Sagamore, in his way, loved Myrtle truly. His heart beat faster still when he beheld her unaltered, a pale, gentle, womanly creature, more beautiful in his eyes, sweeter, purer, than an angel of heaven, for in his thoughts, which she had filled for many months, she held no less a place than that. How she blushed in greeting him! Yet how gracefully and becomingly she offered her congratulations on his great victory! She had been reading the papers, and the papers were full of it and him. He took one up. His own likeness stared out at him, his own and that of the girl's father. The victory was a decisive one—a Republican landslide, embracing the entire country. Illinois had done herself proud from a Republican point of view, giving to the national ticket over a hundred and fifty thousand majority, and to the local ticket but little less. Mr. Sagamore was very happy. He talked with more than usual animation during breakfast. Aunt Sadie had not come down, and Myrtle presided at table.

Mr. Sagamore did not go down town after breakfast.

Pleading a feeling of lassitude, he allowed Mr. Watterson to face the world alone. Myrtle retired into her study, thinking that he would, of course, accompany her father; but she was surprised a moment later to see him enter there. She blushed and then turned pale. This coming after his proposal to her father, could mean but one thing. It was bound to come, she knew, but she wished that he could have waited a few days longer. Not that she wanted time to consider, but, with a gentle woman's dread of causing another deep and lasting pain, she would fain have postponed the dreaded hour.

"Still at work, I see," he said, smiling.

"Yes," she replied, in a constrained voice. "I have much writing to do."

"Nevertheless, Miss Myrtle," he said, softly, "I must venture to interrupt it, because I wish to talk to you upon a certain matter."

"About—the—Cause?" she faltered.

"No, not about the Cause," he replied, smiling, "but about a matter of far greater moment to me, and, I hope, to you. May I speak, Miss Myrtle?"

She bowed, with a semblance of calm composure that strongly belied her inward trepidation.

"Miss Myrtle, it is nearly a year since I saw you for the first time. I was attracted to you from the first moment of our meeting. You were so different from other women that you awakened my interest and admiration, which feeling since then has ripened into deep regard. I spoke to your father some time ago, and asked his permission to address you. Has he told you of it?"

"Yes," replied Myrtle, in a low voice.

"I then had nothing, was nobody, and could not in honor ask you to share my uncertain future with me. But now I have attained a position, and it is no small one. My future lies before me and is bright with promise. I ask you, Myrtle, to share my position and my future—to be my wife. I love you very dearly."

Myrtle did not answer him at once, but sat for the space of half a minute looking down. He waited with the greatest patience, smiling a little at her hesitation. He followed

her glance, and beheld a well-shod little foot peeping out from beneath her ample gray gown. It was tapping the carpet with absolute vehemence. Her cheeks, too, were red and her bosom heaving with emotion.

"Answer me, Myrtle," he said, gently. "You are a woman of depth and understanding. You can comprehend the greatness of the position which I ask you to share with me, and are able to realize the power it will give me to further your—our—Cause. My aspirations, my hopes and aims for the future, you know. Be my wife, Myrtle, and help me to gain them, and when they are gained, you shall share them with me and lend dignity and grace to the honors, however high. It is hard for a man to climb alone with none to assist him up the heights nor care when he has attained them. With you by my side, Myrtle, to encourage and guide and inspire me, I will conquer the world."

He spoke very earnestly, glowingly, regarding her the while with a deep, tender, admiring gaze.

"Mr. Sagamore," said Myrtle, quietly. "My ambitions do not tend towards high honors, nor do I aspire to assist any man to attain them. I thank you for the honor you have done me, but I must beg leave to decline."

His eyes expressed astonishment, dismay, chagrin, as he stood regarding her for a moment after this. The answer was so different from the one he had expected, that he could not for a moment believe his ears nor credit his understanding.

"Do you mean that you refuse to marry me, Myrtle?" he said, confusedly.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Sagamore," replied Myrtle, demurely. "I know that it betrays an absence of appreciation on my part to refuse an honor so great, but we cannot help our failings, and mine, I confess it, is a deplorable tendency to consider myself the equal of any man, however high his position or promising his future; and this ridiculous presumption will neither admit of my being raised up nor of spending my life in assisting another to attain honors in order that I might lend dignity and grace to him and them."

He was very quick, and he saw in one moment the mistake he had made in appealing to her intellect instead of

her heart, in a matter so nearly affecting her woman's nature. He clearly saw his error and he hastened to redeem himself.

"Myrtle, you have misunderstood me," he said, eagerly. "I love you very dearly, and it shall be my earnest endeavor to make your life a happy one. In speaking of my position and future I spoke of what would be yours also, and if I dwelt upon the honors you would gain by marrying me, it was because I felt that a man of my years must call in all possible auxiliaries to aid him in winning a woman at once young and beautiful. Personally I have, I am aware, little to recommend me. I am a man of middle age, without fortune, and far from handsome. You are young, and in my eyes the most beautiful of women. You have besides won fame in a field of intellectual endeavor. Is it any wonder that in considering all this I should, in pleading my cause, call to my aid every possible advantage I possess or may possess? You are more than my equal, Myrtle—more than the equal of any man. You are an angel of light and leading, possessed of a deep womanly sympathy that I admired long before I knew you personally. Do not turn away from me, Myrtle. I did wrong, I see it now, in basing my plea upon the honors I might give you or the assistance I might render you in your Cause. I should have stood before you solely upon my manhood and pleaded my cause as from man to woman. Listen to me, Myrtle. I love you with all my heart. Believe me, I do. If you will become my wife, I will devote my life to making you happy. Your happiness shall be my unceasing care; your Cause shall be mine in very truth, and we will labor in it together—or rather, I will labor in it alone, relieving you of all care, all anxiety, for it shall be my earnest purpose to make your life a bed of roses, and you the queen and glory of my life."

He pleaded his cause well, so well that Myrtle's eyes were swimming in tears ere he had concluded. He stood mutely before her now, his powerful face expressing the greatest emotion. He understood the girl better now, and he cursed himself for the confidence he had displayed in approaching her, and the stupidity he had been guilty of throughout, in judging her to be vain, and weak, and shallow

enough to be captivated by the things which he could flash before her eyes. In his desire to redeem himself, he had shown an eager sincerity that moved Myrtle to the soul. In view of the colossal egotism which he had at first displayed, she had been able to listen to his proposal with composure, even to answer it in a spirit of mockery, but when she saw how deeply sincere and earnest he was at bottom, she felt wretched.

There was much in what he said that would have displeased her, had she been disposed to critically examine his words and meaning. She did not want her life to be made a bed of roses. She did not want to be relieved of all anxiety, all care. It was this very thing in him which, had she been wholly free and favorably inclined to his suit, would have aroused all the antagonism of her nature. First, he had looked down at her as one whom he would raise up to share his glory and his greatness, then going to the other extreme, he now looked up as to an angel for whose attendance he pleaded, promising in requital to make her life one of grandeur and comfort and innocuous ease. This young woman did not propose to sink her individuality into that of her husband, save on terms of absolute equality.

But nothing of this occurred to Myrtle at this time. She was too deeply moved to think of aught but the pain she was about to cause this strong man. She rose in deepest agitation and placing one hand upon his arm, she gazed into his eyes with strong emotion.

"Mr. Sagamore," she said, in a trembling voice, "I am deeply, deeply grateful to you. Believe me, I am. But—but my answer must be the same."

"Must it, Myrtle?" he said, blankly. "Why? Why? Have I offended you past redemption?"

"No, no, Mr. Sagamore!" cried Myrtle, eagerly. "You have honored me above all women."

"Then why must your answer be the same?" he asked.

"Because I do not love you, Mr. Sagamore."

"I did not expect you would—now."

"I never could, Mr. Sagamore, because—because my love is not mine to give," she replied, in a very low voice.

"Oh!"

He stood looking at her for a moment, as if puzzling over her words.

She regarded him with gentle, beseeching eyes. Her quivering lips and trembling chin, her bosom heaving stormily, betrayed her deep emotion.

"Do you mean that you love another man?—that you are going to marry another man?" gasped the man.

"I do love another man, and I do hope to marry him some day," replied Myrtle.

He said "Oh!" again very softly, passing his hand over his broad brow. There was something so touching, so inexpressibly sad in the way he uttered the little monosyllable, that Myrtle was moved to the very center of her being. She sank upon her knees, and bowing her head upon the desk she wept aloud.

He stood looking down at her for one moment, then without a word turned and walked from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER XLIX.

RECONCILIATION.

The uproar occasioned by the Marblemore disruption, as may be imagined, was very great. All sorts of wild rumors were afloat, but nothing definite was known, save that the Reverend Mortimer Ringrose had been driven from the Marblemore mansion and later horsewhipped within an inch of his life, by the infuriated banker, who was referred to in the reports as the "injured husband," thus at once branding the criminal and the crime. The minister now, it was said, was lying at death's door within the parsonage attended only by his wife, while Mrs. Marblemore remained incarcerated in the mansion, closely guarded by her husband. Some color was given to this last by the absolute seclusion of the banker and his wife. Mr. Marblemore would see no one, and Mrs. Marblemore likewise denied herself to all callers.

Public opinion in the city was divided on the question of Mrs. Marblemore's guilt. She had many enemies among the more aristocratically inclined, but also hosts of friends, who stoutly defended the slandered lady against the poisonous attacks of those whom by her past social enormities she had grievously offended. Battles of extraordinary virulence raged. The first meeting held by the Clarenceburg Women's League, following upon the scandal, ended in an uproar which bade fair to wipe that august body from existence.

To begin with, Aunt Sadie was absent and the immediate necessity of choosing a temporary chairman, promptly revived all warring factions, no two of which could agree upon any particular member. The faction led by Mrs. Delaware nominated Mrs. Hammersmith, whereupon all opposing parties united and harmoniously wrought that lady's defeat. Mrs. Bull put forward by her friends was promptly bowled over by the Traviston faction, uniting with the

Delaware forces. And so it went until Mrs. Delaware, in despair, called upon little Mrs. Ferguson. The grocer's wife, being a meek and unassuming little woman, and moreover the only member of that body without office, was acclaimed on all sides; and peace reigned once more. Only for a moment, however.

Mrs. Ferguson had no sooner called the meeting to order, when Mrs. Delaware was upon her feet demanding recognition, obtaining which, she at once burst into a tirade of abuse of Mrs. Marblemore, whom she venomously characterized as grossly immoral, an unfaithful wife, and perjured woman, whose disgrace called for prompt action on the part of the League, if that body would escape the calumny properly attending the recognized associates of such a fallen creature.

"I move," continued Mrs. Delaware, coldly ignoring the growing demonstration of disapproval on the part of the younger members, "that a resolution be unanimously adopted, denouncing this woman, and that she forthwith be expelled from the League."

"Second the motion," said Mrs. Hammersmith, promptly.

Mrs. Thompson, too, nodded, and half a dozen other members signified their assent by applauding, but the others broke out into open rebellion. Cries of "Never! Never!" mingled with incoherent shrieks of horrified protest.

"Oh, it's a shame!" cried little Mrs. Sawyer, bravely facing the autocratic secretary, with cheeks all flushed and eyes flashing with excitement. "How *can* you be so heartless? It's mean! It's contemptible! You have no right to speak so of Mrs. Marblemore. If Aunt Sadie were here you wouldn't dare. I don't care. I won't be quiet. I'm not out of order. I say it's a shame. Mrs. Marblemore's *good,* and I love her; we all love her."

"We do! We do!" cried the others, crowding around the intrepid little woman.

"My dear—" began Mrs. Hammersmith, mildly.

"I'm not your dear," interrupted Mrs. Sawyer, sharply. "I don't want you to speak to me at all."

"Mrs. Sawyer is out of order," said Mrs. Delaware, icily.

"I'm not; I resign right here and now. I don't want to belong to such a heartless, mean, contemptible club. You can keep your old League, so there!"

"Me too," shrieked Mrs. Primrose. "I resign!"

"And I! and I! and I!" a score of voices swelled the chorus.

Mrs. Delaware arose in great alarm.

"Ladies! Ladies, be calm!" she cried.

"Then withdraw your resolution," cried Mrs. Sawyer.

"Let us discuss—"

"Withdraw the resolution!" shrieked the little woman, hysterically. "Do you withdraw?"—

"I do."

Victory won, Mrs. Sawyer promptly fainted. Her confederates gathered around her sympathetically. There was no business possible after that, and the meeting presently adjourned. It may be said in passing that from that time on Mrs. Delaware's authority within the League was nil. The rules laid down by her, the regulations so long in force, held good at future meetings, but the slightest demonstration of authority on the part of the Secretary met with the most decided and crushing opposition. And she dared not send in her resignation, as in earlier days, lest it be accepted.

The Reverend Mortimer Ringrose in the meantime, as a result of the terrible punishment he had received, remained in strict seclusion, shunned and abhorred by all. At the end of some four weeks he took himself and his family to Chicago, as upon another occasion. From thence he forestalled any action that might have been taken against him by the church council at Clarenceburg, by sending in his resignation on the ground of finding it impossible to longer endure the malicious gossiping and persecution of a certain coterie in the church. His encounter with the great banker, though it was a matter of common knowledge, was never authoritatively published, owing to that unaccountable tenderness which the press feels for men of wealth and importance. Rumor did not hurt His Reverence, for rumor could be denied with a proper show of indignation, with

rolling eyes and meekly folded hands. Mr. Ringrose, in a word, posed as a martyr again. In view of his oft recurring difficulties, he was pretty thoroughly roasted by both clergy and laity, but he soon received a call, which, though it came from a very small, country parish in the far West, he made haste to accept.

All this time Aunt Sadie lay severely ill. The news of her sudden prostration spread through the town like wild-fire, creating consternation everywhere. Then was seen the regard in which this good lady was universally held. The townspeople flocked to the old grey house in dozens, in scores, in hundreds it seemed to poor harrassed Franklin, eagerly begging news of her, and asking to be permitted to see her. Half the women of the town volunteered their services in nursing the sick lady. They stood about in numbers, recounting the benefits which Aunt Sadie had showered upon them. This one she had nursed in sickness, that one carried safely through confinement, the child of a third had been saved by her unceasing care and devotion, the husband of a fourth had secured steady employment through her efforts, the son of a fifth had been turned from evil ways by a sensible talk from Aunt Sadie. And so on. There were few who had not in some way benefitted at her hands. The attending physicians were overwhelmed with questions as to the sick lady's condition, and in the end they issued bulletins announcing her progress from hour to hour.

The autumn gave way to winter, which in turn was succeeded by spring, and still to Mr. Watterson and to Myrtle, lovingly attending upon the sick lady, it seemed as if the turning point never would come; but come it did at last. Mr. Watterson rarely left his home during this time. Mr. Sagamore was duly inaugurated Governor of Illinois, and began his administration under the most favorable auspices. His own election to the United States Senate took place during this period of anxiety; but he paid little attention to it all. Dillingham had charge of the organization now, and to him was given the highly agreeable task of dividing up the patronage among the faithful. It was not until his sister was pronounced out of all danger by the attending physicians, that the big man once more began to

take an active interest in outside affairs, and then he awoke to the fact that Dillingham and Governor Sagamore were battling fiercely over various matters pertaining to local patronage.

The news of Aunt Sadie's improvement created universal joy. As soon as she was strong enough to receive them, visitors were admitted to the sick chamber, and so Aunt Sadie was enabled to see and inquire into the welfare of all her friends, long before she was able to go out among them. Spring was well advanced when Aunt Sadie, to Franklin's great joy, took her accustomed place in the dining-room, and spring was merging into summer ere she spoke of visiting her friends as usual. Her first visit then was to Mary. Winfield had apprised her of all that had transpired during her long illness. She had learned of Mary's seclusion, of Andrew's retirement from business. Things looked very bad, but there was much hope in the fact that they had not separated. Something was amiss, certainly, but there had been no open rupture. No one knew anything of a certainty. Aunt Sadie firmly believed that it was all a misunderstanding which could be cleared up. She was ardently hopeful of effecting a reconciliation between the estranged pair, and this hope contributed largely to aid her recovery.

"I shall go to her, Winfield," she said, one morning. "If she is innocent, which I firmly believe, she needs me. If by any possibility she should not be wholly guiltless, she needs me more. Do not forbid me, brother. My heart is almost broken, thinking of Mary."

"You must wait until you are strong, Sadie," urged her brother. "Violent agitation will be of great harm to you in your weakened condition."

Aunt Sadie very sensibly agreed to this, and remained at home until unable longer to endure the anxious thoughts that beset her mind, she started out one morning, determined to resolve her doubts for good and all. It was early in June, and the sky was beautifully blue and clear; the trees newly clothed in green, rustled a welcome to the stately lady. Flowers were blooming everywhere, and the pure, cool air of the prairies, sweeping in gentle waves around her, filled Aunt Sadie with intoxicating joy. How beautiful

Nature was! How sweet and charming the sunshine and the flowers! Aunt Sadie looked around her with brightly beaming glances, at the familiar trees and smooth, green lawns, and beautiful mansions, all harboring friends, her dear, good, kind friends. She met many people, and was often stopped by the way and congratulated upon her recovery. She was still thin and pale, and around her eyes was a dark, moist coloring, such as you see sometimes in the faces of delicate children. Her form was not as robust as of yore; her step was not as buoyant. Two patches of grey had appeared in her hair, just above the temples, which, however, added to her matronly beauty, giving to the face, already thin from suffering, that touching look of patient endurance which is inevitably associated in our minds with maternity. Every one smiled gladly at sight of Aunt Sadie, and paused to speak a word of sympathy and pleasure.

"I am calling on Mary," she said, brightly, whenever questioned. "I have not seen her for ever so long."

John opened the door to her, and very wide John's eyes became at sight of Aunt Sadie. James came forward, and George and Henry, all eager to welcome her to that house of mourning.

"Where is Mary—Mrs. Marblemore?" asked Aunt Sadie.

"Upstairs in her room."

Aunt Sadie slowly mounted the steps, and without pause, went to the familiar chamber, where she came upon Mary, who doubtless had seen her from the window, standing in the middle of the room with her hands pressing upon her heart. She remained motionless, standing there, looking at her friend. Aunt Sadie held out her arms to her with that sweet smile that belonged only to her.

"Mary," she said, and Mary crying out, came rushing into her arms like a child, and buried her face on Aunt Sadie's bosom. The cry went to Aunt Sadie's heart, it was so womanly in its depth of feeling; it could only have come from a heart purified and ennobled by suffering.

"You are innocent, my Mary!" cried Aunt Sadie, in a rapture of joy. "Oh, I knew it! I always said so! I was sure of it! I told Winfield so! Oh my sweet, sweet Mary!"

Mary drew Aunt Sadie into a chair, and kneeling down beside her as to a mother, she poured out all her confession, told the extent of her guilt, even to the desperate purpose of deserting her husband, told how she had resisted that mad desire, how she had in the very hour of decision, conquered it. How she had come to loath the man, her tempter, and concluded with an account of the happenings of that awful day.

"I am innocent, Auntie," she said, earnestly. "I did think of him, but I never, never loved him—was not even infatuated with him, I am sure. I simply did not know myself until in the very hour when I hovered between right and wrong, the truth flashed upon me, and I knew that I loved my husband, and that this man was really abhorrent to me; his touch had filled me with loathing even when the fascination that he exercised over me was the strongest. And when he came to me that day I told him how I despised and hated him, and—and he caught me in his arms and I was helpless, and in that moment you came in with Andrew."

Aunt Sadie was very thoughtful throughout this narrative, but she did not shrink from Mary, as Mary half expected her to do. No, she bent down and kissed the poor, thin face from time to time, with all the tenderness she felt for her suffering friend.

"You are much changed, my love," she said, looking into Mary's hollow eyes, and regarding her wan cheeks with pity.

"And you, Auntie," said Mary. "You have been ill because of me. Your hair has turned gray, though I have never seen anything so becoming."

"Never mind me, my dear. I am very, very happy. Tell me, Mary, does Andrew know of this?"

"No, Sadie; he believes me guilty. I am guilty, I know, but not guilty of what he thinks me. Oh, I have been so weak all my life! Auntie, you love me, I know, but after what I have told you can you still respect me?"

"Surely, Mary. You have done no wrong—no actual wrong. You fell into error when you allowed your thoughts to dwell on this man. You allowed your imagination to carry you away for a while, but at the last moment you

showed yourself a true, sweet woman, and you are worthy of all esteem. Indeed, indeed you are."

"Oh, I thank you, Sadie."

"Where is Andrew, my love?"

"He is in his shop. He is very cold to me. I do not venture into his presence. He does not speak to me, nor even see me, sometimes for weeks. He rarely leaves his shop. Sometimes he seems to remember himself, and he comes to me and tells me to make ready for certain changes in our mode of life, which he contemplated in the beginning, then he returns to his shop and forgets all about it. Oh, I have been so wretched! If you had died, Auntie, I would surely have killed myself. But I knew,—I hoped, I mean, that you would come to me when you got well. What is it, Auntie?" she added, in some anxiety, seeing Aunt Sadie's thoughtful face.

"I have been thinking, my child, whether it will be best for you to confess all to Andrew, or withhold from him the knowledge of your momentary aberration of mind."

"Oh, Sadie, I could never let him remain ignorant if he took me back. I would tell him all."

"My child, you would be foolish. Half the ills of the world are due to injudicious candor. You have done no actual wrong, then why poison his mind with the doubts and qualms that beset yours? Why tell him the trial out of which you came so nobly? He would be sure to overlook your triumphant victory, and judge you by that which went before. Men are good creatures, my love, but not over wise, that is why we women were placed here, to watch over them, poor dears, and guide their footsteps from childhood to old age. Think what the world would come to, Mary, if all wives would feel themselves in duty bound to confess their innermost thoughts to their husbands. A howling wilderness, my dear, I assure you."

Aunt Sadie shook her head very sagaciously here, and smiling, continued:

"They will come, these wicked thoughts, and we should constantly be on our guard to combat them. We should cultivate good thoughts, Mary, beautiful, loving thoughts, for thoughts, my love, are the quintessence of Nature's living

forces. They influence for good or ill, according to their nature, not only those who think them, but all the world. You can look into your husband's eyes and say that you are innocent, can not you, Mary?"

"Yes, Sadie, a thousand, thousand times."

"Then, my dear, let what is past be buried forever in our hearts. Let us go to Andrew, Mary," said Aunt Sadie, rising and taking Mary's hand in hers.

Hand in hand they went through the hall and up the steps to the little chamber in which Andrew conducted his experiments.

"Wait here for me, Mary," said Aunt Sadie, gently, pausing at the door.

"Oh, Sadie, will he—will he take me back, do you think?" said Mary, who was very pale.

"My love, he shall be on his knees to you within the hour," said Aunt Sadie, stoutly. "Am I not here?"

She went into the room and saw the banker sitting on a bench, in the midst of a hundred contrivances. His back was turned to the door, and he was bending low over a bit of mechanism, so deeply absorbed in it that he did not hear Aunt Sadie's approach nor mark her presence until she placed her hand upon his shoulder. He looked up slowly, then sprang to his feet with an exclamation of joy. Aunt Sadie was startled by the change in him, he looked so thin and pale and shrunken, that her heart melted in her bosom with compassion.

"My dear, dear Sadie," he said, in a husky voice.

"You are not well, Andrew," said Aunt Sadie, sitting down beside him. "You look worn."

"I am very well," he replied, wearily. "It does not matter. Why did you come, Sadie?"

"I have come to right a great wrong," said Aunt Sadie, gravely.

He stared at her without speaking, and with his stained and blackened fingers smoothed his neglected beard.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive, Andrew," continued Aunt Sadie, "and may lead us into gross error."

Still he stared at her without speaking, pursing his lips gently, as one in doubt.

"Andrew, Mary is innocent!"

"Innocent!" he cried, starting up.

"Yes, innocent. Listen Andrew—"

"Did we not see her in the man's arms?"

"We did, Andrew, but—"

"If she is innocent why did she not say so? By her silence, if by nothing else, she has confessed her guilt."

"You are hard, Andrew, and cruelly unjust. We saw her in the man's arms, but she was held against her will. As for her silence, remember her woman's pride. You judged her without a hearing, and you know that if she had spoken at that time, you would not have believed her."

"I would not."

"And now you believe her guilty because she did not speak and declare her innocence! Oh, Andrew, you do not deserve Mary. She is far, far too good for you. She is true to you and faithful to her marriage vows. She always has been true and faithful. The wrong she did you was in concealing from you, her husband, this wicked man's pursuit. She knew of it, of course. She read his wicked designs in his eyes. She should have told you, but she did not, wishing to shield him because of his sacred calling."

"Stay, Sadie!" cried Mr. Marblemore. "She did try repeatedly to influence me against him, but I thought—I have since thought that was all a part of the game to deceive me."

"For shame, Andrew! It is very wrong for us to put the worst possible construction on things in that way. Mary sought to evade him in every way, but he was persistent. On that day he came to her, Andrew, almost mad with evil passion, and asked Mary to go away with him. She repulsed him with scorn, and as she stood weeping for very shame, he sprang upon her and caught her in his arms, and in that moment we came in upon them."

"Is this thing possible?" stammered the banker, staring around the room.

"It is true, Andrew. And you, without giving her a hearing, judged her guilty. Oh, Andrew, you have much to answer for. Absorbed in your business day by day through all the years of your married life, you never thought

of the loneliness of the young and beautiful woman, your wife, living here in this great mansion, a prey to brooding thoughts. It would have served you right if she *had* allowed her mind to dwell upon forbidden things—if she *had* thought of this man, who, entering her life unbidden, would, in a woman less strong and pure and faithful, have awakened thoughts and stirred dormant passions that might have led to a terrible ending. Andrew, you should go on your knees to Mary and beg forgiveness for the great wrong you have done her."

"Where is she, Sadie? he cried. "Where is Mary?"

The door opened and Mary came rushing into his arms, laughing and crying like a mad creature.

"Mary!" he said, taking her face in his hands and looking deep into her eyes. "Tell me truly, Mary, are you innocent?"

"I am, Andrew!" cried Mary. "I am! Could I look into your dear eyes like this if I were guilty? Oh husband, I have been cold to you, but not unfaithful. I have been unloving for years, but I have been true."

"Then what have I done?" he cried out, in deepest anguish. "Mary, what shall I do to gain your forgiveness?"

"Love me, Andrew! Love me, and let me love you."

"But Mary—"

"Hush, sweet husband, don't let us speak of it again. Here is Aunt Sadie, dear, good, beautiful Aunt Sadie. See Andrew, her hair is gray. She has been sick, grieving over us. Kiss her, Andrew. Put your arms around her neck—so. Now kiss her like this. Oh God, but I am happy!"

"Dear Sadie," said Mr. Marblemore, brokenly. "You have made us very happy."

"My experience has been, Andrew," said Aunt Sadie, nodding sagely, "that most people's happiness lies within reach of their hands, only they are too thoughtless or too proud to reach out and grasp it. Take Mary away for a while, Andrew. A change will benefit you both."

"I will, Sadie."

That day for the first time in eight months Mr. Marblemore went to the bank. Johnson almost fainted at sight of his chief. Davidson rose promptly from the great desk to

make way for the master, and the banker sat down. For an hour, two hours he remained, turning over papers, reading letters and listening to Davidson's reports, but through it all his air was abstracted, his manner listless. There had been losses of course, but the losses had been chiefly in the falling through of those schemes, which, at the time of the great man's retirement, had been still in the air, or in the incipient stages of investure. As for the old investments, they rested in too solid a foundation to have come to any harm.

"I have been content to let things drift along," said Davidson, "in the hope of your return, sir. The last and grandest scheme of all has fallen through. The big men, alarmed by your sudden withdrawal, refused to come in, and so it fell through with the others. It is unfortunate, very unfortunate indeed, sir—"

"It is well," said Mr. Marblemore, smiling. "I am going to retire, and at once. I could not if I would, get into the swim of things again, and, what is more to the purpose, I would not if I could. I am tired. We are going away, my wife and I. Do you stay here, Davidson. I shall make arrangements by which everything will be placed in your hands."

He went away and did not again return. Some few days later he left the city with his wife, and business knew him no more.

CHAPTER L.

AFTER TWO YEARS.

Washington was full of bustling life and animation. Affairs of unusual importance had protracted the session of Congress far into June, and the city was thronged with visitors who came flocking from all parts of the country, eager to see the famous haunts of famous men of times past and present. The stately Capitol, always the center of attraction to the women, was crowded with the fairest and bravest, who strolled in twos and threes, or in larger groups, passing and repassing upon the wide walks and broad stairways leading on all sides to the great doors in and out of which they swarmed like bees. Some few men were there, though they looked sadly out of place amid the multi-colored finery of the women, brown clods in a wilderness of flowers, they pursued their way rapidly, as if conscious of their incongruity and anxious to escape this scene of gayety and fire. All but one young man, a tall, bronzed and bearded youth, who stood motionless upon the first landing of that staircase which faces Pennsylvania Avenue. He smiled as he gazed upon the bustling scene around him. He was rather grave of face, and distinguished enough in appearance to merit more than passing notice. He was quietly dressed and his attitude, as he leaned upon the broad, stone balustrade, was gracefully negligent, denoting bodily strength and poise, and ease of mind and manner.

"Why, hello, old man!" said a voice at his elbow, startling him from his reverie. "Is it really you, Sherman, returned to God's country?"

"It is really I, Farraday," replied the young man, shaking hands with the natty journalist, who on his way to the street had paused to greet his old friend.

"I'm exceedingly glad to see you. But aren't you a little ahead of your time? The Senator told me the other day that you were 'way in the interior of China."

"No; I was going to China, but the war broke out, and I came home."

"Too late, my son," declared Farraday, cheerfully.

"How is that?" demanded Sherman.

"It's all off."

"What's all off?"

"The war."

"You don't say so?"

"Nothing to it. A question of weeks, I assure you."

"Do you mean to say there won't be any fighting?" asked Sherman, with an air implying deep injury. "Why, the President called for volunteers only the other day."

"Politics, my son, politics."

"Well that remains to be seen," replied Sherman, grimly. "I'm going to join my regiment anyhow and hope for the best."

"Which?"

"Fifth Illinois. Got a second-lieutenancy in the militia. Had it before I left."

"Filled long ago. You're too late, I tell you. The President called for two hundred thousand volunteers in all. About two million have already offered. Besides, I thought you were against war on principle?"

"I am."

"Well, then why—"

"Oh, man, this is different," replied Sherman, coloring. "Theories are all well enough in time of peace, but in time of war one has to face conditions. The country is calling."

Farraday chuckled.

"Nice kind of an idealist you are," he cried, derisively. "But then, I'll forgive you. Been around the world?"

"Pretty well. Are you stationed here now? I congratulate you. Magnificent building, the Capitol."

"Oh, so, so," replied Farraday, as carelessly as if he owned it. "Seen the Senator yet?"

"No; I was waiting for him here."

"Why, the Senate's not in session now. Only ten o'clock."

"What time does it convene?"

"On the stroke of twelve. Senator Watterson is prob-

ably at his hotel at this hour, or with the President. They're as thick as thieves, your uncle and the President."

"Where is he stopping?"

"At the Arlington. Come along, I'll show you."

The journalist linked his arm in that of his friend, and they went down into the broad, beautiful avenue together.

"Pretty fair structure, you think?" resumed Farraday, with a wave of his hand towards the Capitol. "Nothing like it in effete Europe, eh?"

Sherman grinned. "Ever been abroad?" he asked.

"No; this little old country's good enough for me. Why? Think by crossing the pond I'd get different notions?"

"Oh, no. The more you see of Europe, the prouder you are of America. Only you might learn to appreciate your country at its true value—intelligently, you know, not egotistically, as now."

"Hum. Think so? Been kow-towing to kings and such?"

"Not I. I'd see every king in Europe damned before I'd cross the street to shake hands with one of 'em—as a king."

"Which I am free to remark, is rather a strong expression, my son," murmured the journalist.

"Oh, I'm disgusted. How any citizen of this country can consistently recognize the principle of king-rule, by allowing himself to be "presented" to a king, passes my comprehension. And yet you read of it every day. Of course, the puppies whose money gives them sufficient prominence to be noticed in the newspapers are not representative; but as their doings are chronicled to the exclusion of all else, an erroneous impression prevails in this country that all Americans who go abroad are bent only on rendering homage to a fat-headed king. That's wrong. There are many hundreds of traveling Americans who cherish our national ideals too highly to violate the principle underlying this Republic in that way. You don't want to judge every man by the idiots you read about."

"Oh, all right. My hands are up," grinned Farraday. "Sail right in. Don't mind me."

"Well, it is sickening and you can't deny it," growled the young man. "However, you can't expect much from the individual American, when his Government actually stultifies itself by sending envoys and ambassadors extraordinary to royal coronations, when it absolutely should withdraw its regular popinjay upon such occasions to show in an unequivocal manner its disapproval of a kind of government fit only for savages and fools."

"Oh, that's a matter of policy, I guess, more than anything else."

"Policy be hanged! Do they send a special representative over here when we inaugurate a President? No, they don't. No, sir. We're either right or else we're wrong in our national ideals; if we're right, we should refuse, as a nation and as individuals, to countenance any system of caste, or government founded upon birth-right. If we're wrong, then, for heaven's sake, let's get out from under."

"Well, well, I see that you've returned with the bark on. We'll let it go at that. By the bye, your good aunt was glad to get her boy back again, no doubt?"

"My dear Farraday, when I tell you that I landed in New York yesterday and came straight on here, you will understand—"

"Why, she's here."

Sherman stared.

"Your aunt is here," repeated Farraday, smiling. "She's been here these three months."

"What! Aunt Sadie here? In Washington? Why, I thought—she wrote me—"

"Just so. Couldn't leave her friends, eh? Too timid to travel? The fact is, she's come to look after her brother. He's a kind of precocious infant away from his sister's apron strings. The little preacher's here, too."

"Ah!" said Sherman, with sparkling eyes. "Myrtle here!"

"Surest thing you know! Get a move on. We might as well ride the rest of the way, eh?"

So they caught a car and soon were whizzing towards the heart of the beautiful capital city. Farraday talked of

public affairs, but especially of the part Senator Watterson played in them.

"He's the coming man, Sherman," he declared, with uncommon enthusiasm. "He has proved himself a statesman of magnitude. His stand on the Cuban question has won him the confidence of the conservative element, though the turbulent frown upon him for his determined stand against the war. He has upheld the President's hands throughout. He did his best to stem the torrent precipitated by the firebrands in both Houses making for war. But war was inevitable. The hotheads always gain the day in contests like these; but his course in this crisis will stand him in good stead in the future. Here we are. See you later. So long."

They parted, the journalist making off in one direction, while Sherman hastened into the hotel, where he presented his card and preferred his request. He was promptly conveyed to his uncle's apartments. The negro bade him wait in the ante-room a moment while he carried his card in to the ladies. He had waited scarce a moment, when he heard a little shriek—nay, two little shrieks, followed by a prodigious rustling of silken raiment, and the next moment Aunt Sadie stood before him, Aunt Sadie radiant in a magnificent gown of amber colored satin. She stood for a moment like one transfixed, gazing at her boy with large, round eyes of wonder and delight. Sherman caught a glimpse of another face and form behind the elder lady, a face all pale and agitated, and then the rich portieres came together and he was clasped in the arms of his loving aunt.

"My boy! My sweet, precious, darling boy!" cried the delighted lady, hanging upon him in a transport of wonder and delight and happiness. "Is it really you come back to us? Dear God, I am so happy. Let me look at you." She held him off, and looked him over with a glance of pride beautiful to see. "Not changed," she cried, embracing him once more; "not changed in the least little tiny bit. I'm overjoyed! I'm delighted! My gracious me! I never was so surprised and pleased in all my life! Never!"

"Dear, good, sweet Aunt Sadie!" said Sherman, gazing tenderly and reverently into her bright, kind eyes.

She went into ecstasies over his bronzed and bearded

face, and he, it seemed as if he never would again release the fond lady from his strong, encircling arms.

"You look so much like poor, dear Richard, your father, looked, when he came to bid me good-bye," said Aunt Sadie, weeping now for pure joy.

"Your hair is gray, Auntie," said Sherman, touching the locks of white above the temples with a look of admiring wonder. "And when I went away it was a beautiful brown. How does that come, Auntie?"

"Thinking of my absent boy, perhaps," cried Aunt Sadie, laughing. "But how did you come to return home so suddenly, darling?" she added, drawing him down beside her on the sofa. "Did you make up your mind to surprise us?"

"The war, Auntie. I came home at once when war was declared. But I'm too late, it seems," said Sherman ruefully.

"I'm glad," replied Aunt Sadie, devoutly.

"Oh, are you, you wicked Auntie," he cried, hugging her. "My, my, but this is luxury!" looking around the gorgeous apartment.

"Indeed, yes; we've become quite fashionable, Winfield and I."

"And Myrtle? Where is Myrtle, Auntie? Did not I see her—"

"To be sure, my dear!" cried Aunt Sadie, starting up. "Myrtle is here. Come in, darling. She is waiting for you."

She was standing very quietly at the other end of the room awaiting him; but retreated a step or two at his appearance, retreated blushing with a timidity strangely sweet to Sherman. How beautiful she looked, as she stood half turned away from him with lovely eyes regarding him gravely, questioningly, appealingly. She still was fond of grey and wore now as she stood before him a loose, flowing gown of her favorite color, richly trimmed with lace. It was a tasteful gown, pretty in its sweeping swell, and yet quiet, almost nun-like in effect.

Sherman advanced a step into the room and paused, smiling the old, boyish smile, which Myrtle loved so dearly.

He was wonderfully embrowned; he had broadened mightily, and was bearded like the pard, but he stood before her regarding her with the same eager, boyish eyes, which she in memory worshipped.

"Myrtle," he said softly.

That was all; but there was that in the way he pronounced the name that told of years of tender thought clustering about it. It thrilled Myrtle through and through. She came forward a step or two to meet his ardent approach. She gave him her hands, smiling a little, and he bent down and kissed them tenderly. For a long moment they stood with clasped hands gazing into each other's eyes.

To Myrtle standing there quietly awaiting she knew not what, that moment seemed fraught with the essence of all tragedy. She had long looked forward to this meeting, and with quaking heart had wondered what was to be her fate. She had sent him from her an ardent, imaginative boy, he would return a grave, reflective man. His eyes would see things differently, his mind judge with the experience gained by years of thought and travel. Without doubt she would appear changed in his eyes. He would no longer love her as of old. Often and often in her solitude of waiting, the thought had come, chilling her heart with dread foreboding. She waited with dilating eyes, striving with all her feeble might to subdue the storm of emotion that bade fair to overwhelm her.

"Myrtle!" The old, loved voice; the dear familiar tones! Myrtle closed her eyes and waited breathlessly for the dream to vanish. "Dearest Myrtle," said Sherman, softly. "I've come back to you—come back to claim you, dear, for good."

His voice was low and pleading, but the glance with which he regarded her was masterful to a degree. Myrtle shivered, deliciously blushing over cheek and brow as she felt herself drawn towards him gently indeed but irresistibly, until he fairly held her captive in his arms.

"Speak to me, Myrtle," he pleaded. "Do you—am I—is everything to be as we planned long, long ago?"

One glance she gave him, a glance so fraught with tenderness and passion, that Sherman cried out in an ecstasy

of joy, and caught her to his heart. A silence followed, a long silence broken now and then by an inarticulate murmur or a sigh or sob smothered in its birth. Aunt Sadie hiding behind the portieres listening with all her ears, nearly strangled with a kerchief stuffed into her mouth to check a shriek of delighted laughter, which momentarily threatened to break forth and overwhelm the lovers with confusion.

"Speak to me, Myrtle," said Sherman, at last. "Have you thought of me at all in all these years?"

"I thought of you always," she replied. "Oh, my dear, you stayed long. So long, Sherman! I feared you had forgotten me. Am I indeed the same to you, Sherman?" she asked, brushing back her hair, which he had sadly touseled; "do you love me as when you went away?"

"More, my darling, a million times more!"

"But look at me," she urged, entreatingly. "Am I not changed?"

"You are many times more beautiful," he replied.

"Dear Sherman, you know I never was beautiful," she said, earnestly.

"No?" Sherman smiled very proudly down into her eyes. "I have seen the women of all the world, my love, and among them all there was not one to compare with my lovely Myrtle."

The same old Sherman! Myrtle smiled very brightly into his eyes and drew him into a chair kneeling down by his side.

"Am I really the same?" she asked again, with delight. "Is nothing changed? Oh, I am so happy! It was wicked to send you away, my own; but I have suffered, Sherman. I have been so lonely without you all these years. So lonely!"

"You had the Cause, Myrtle," said Sherman, gently.

"Oh, the Cause!" she waved it away, impatiently. "I wanted you," she added, smiling adorably.

"Do I come before the Cause now?"

"You come before all the world, Sherman," replied Myrtle, gazing into his eyes with a gravity wholly sweet and charming. "You always were the first in my heart. It

is my dearest pride to think of that now, and to remember my willingness to yield to you before you went away. I am older now and, it may be, wiser, I know where my true happiness lies. If you had taken me long ago, a child, I would not have been unhappy, for I loved you then as now; but I would not have been as happy as I am now, because I would perhaps never have come to realize fully how much more to me you are than the Cause. You were wiser than I. You saved me from myself. I was weak, but I have come to realize my weakness. I know my mind thoroughly. If you will take me, Sherman—now—with all my imperfections on my head, I shall be proud and happy to become your wife. I shall strive to make your life a happy one, and if constant devotion and a spirit made humble and strong by years of thought, will make for future happiness, be sure that we shall be happy together. I have thought much in these years, my love, and the sum and substance of all my meditation is this: that however high the aspirations of my mind, it is my heart that must govern my life if I would be truly happy, and my heart assures me that I will find true happiness only in becoming your wife."

She spoke this last with blushing cheeks, but with a high look of courage that moved him to the soul.

"Your happiness, Sherman, shall be my deepest joy. I will seek to enter into your thoughts and will make your interests mine. We will become as one, my Sherman, in very truth, only you as my husband shall in all things be the head, for you have proved yourself the stronger, the wiser, and the braver. All of which does not mean that I shall give over my labors in the Cause, but they shall take second place always. My husband shall be first and foremost in my heart and mind. My belief in the right is as strong as ever, though my views have become much modified. I believe that woman should be given the suffrage, but only under certain wise restrictions. She should be forbidden by law to enter public life, for, though she is intellectually man's equal, she is unfitted by nature for public duties. Man should be at the head of the family and of the State. With the ballot in our possession, we can correct existing abuses and discriminations against our sex,

and make politics purer and better, simply because men in power will have to consult our tastes and ideals in putting men forward for elective offices. But—but, oh, I didn't mean to talk about that. Tell me about your travels, my Sherman. Tell me—tell me—am I really and truly the same?"

He answered not in words; but the silence that followed was fraught with wondrous things to the happy girl.

The portieres parted at this moment, and Aunt Sadie came bursting in upon them in a state of prodigious excitement.

"Sh! children," she whispered, with her fingers pressed to her lips. "Winfield's coming up, and we must surprise him. Hide, darling! Here, behind these portieres. Quick, my love, or he will see you!"

Sherman entering into the fun, sprang behind the heavy curtains, and the next moment Senator Watterson came into the room. Sherman saw him from his hiding place and thought, with a sensation of pleasurable emotion, that never in all his lifetime had he seen so handsome, so stately, so majestic a man.

"Well, Sadie," said Mr. Watterson, beaming upon his sister, who sat blushing and smiling and patting her hair, in a state of excitement impossible to describe. "You look quite happy."

"Do I, indeed?" cried Aunt Sadie, trying to look gloomy but not succeeding. "I'm sure you are mistaken, Winfield. Perfectly sure of it!"

"And Myrtle has been crying," continued the Senator, searchingly. "And so have you. Come, that means a long letter from our boy. Perhaps he is even coming home?"

"No, he isn't, Winfield," cried Aunt Sadie, in a perfect tremor of excitement. "He isn't coming home. Really, he isn't, brother; ask Myrtle."

And she burst into a laugh, and sat before him crowing and gurgling and beating her hands together in an ecstasy of delight.

"He isn't coming home, Winfield," she shrieked. "He *is* home! Come out, darling, or I shall die!"

Sherman came from his hiding place and caught his

astonished uncle in his arms and hugged him soundly. Mr. Watterson gazed at him, and from him to Aunt Sadie and back again, as if he thought his good sister had suddenly developed surprising conjuring powers, by means of which she had called up her boy before his bewildered eyes.

"It is our boy, Winfield," cried Aunt Sadie. "Our boy come back to us. Don't you know him?"

"Surely, surely," replied Mr. Watterson. "But I thought he was in China."

"He is not in China, Winfield," said Aunt Sadie, very earnestly. "How can he be in China, brother, when he is here?"

The manifest impossibility of the thing evidently appealed to the Senator, who smiled comprehendingly and pressed the young man in his arms. Sherman told him how he had suddenly cut short his trip and returned home.

"I am very glad," said Mr. Watterson. "And were you kindly received, my lad?" he added, glancing slyly at Myrtle.

"Yes, Uncle," replied Sherman, drawing his blushing sweetheart to his side. "Will you give her to me, sir?"

"With all my heart, Sherman."

"Will you give Myrtle to me, Aunt Sadie?"

"Give her to you!" cried Aunt Sadie, in great astonishment. "Why, to be sure. Of course! I always meant for her to marry you. I always said so; ask Winfield."

It was a happy reunion all around. Later when they were gathered at luncheon, which was served in their apartment, Aunt Sadie explained her surprising presence at Washington.

"Winfield is such a child, my love," said she, gazing fondly across at her gigantic brother. "He must be looked after all the time. He becomes so deeply immersed in work that he neglects his walks and exercises, and you know he is not strong at all. And then he is so good-natured, that unless I am here to watch over him, he will go to dinners and banquets every day, and that wouldn't do at all, you know, when he is so full-blooded. I feared for his digestion, for he will neglect the simplest precautions," continued Aunt Sadie, severely. "I assure you, when I came here three

months ago his health was completely shattered. You have no idea, my dear, how feeble he looked! A mere shadow!"

Sherman had never seen his uncle looking so strong and ruddy as at that moment. The Senator bestowed a sly wink upon him, and catching Myrtle's merry smile across the table, he knew that these two had put their heads together and conspired between them to bring the guileless lady to the Capitol.

"And the friends, Auntie?" hinted Sherman.

"I know, I know, my love," said Aunt Sadie, patting her hair in a flurry. "But my first duty is to my brother. They are all doing nicely, however."

They talked of other things, of the doings of their friends in Washington, and of the many beautiful and interesting sights the capital city offered to visiting strangers. All of which they planned to show to Sherman. He should see his uncle sitting grandly in the midst of all the Senators, Myrtle promised him. He should see Congress in full session, and he should be presented to the President and the President's amiable lady.

"I'm going to the White House this evening, my dear," said Aunt Sadie. "Would you like to go along?"

"We will all go together, Sadie, and pay our respects," interposed Senator Watterson.

"You must know, Sherman," cried Myrtle, "that Aunt Sadie has quite a number of friends in this city whom she visits daily, and Mrs. President is one of them."

"The dearest, sweetest woman, my love," murmured Aunt Sadie. "You have no idea!"

"But where is Daniel, Sherman?" Myrtle asked.

"Why, the fact is, I expected to stay here but a day or two, thinking you were at home, so I told him to hustle out to his parents until I was ready to start West. Seen the General lately, Uncle?"

"We see him nearly every day."

"Is he at all changed?"

"Not in the least."

"He's a dear, good, sweet old man," cried Myrtle.

"Well, I must go now, Sherman," Mr. Watterson said,

rising briskly. "I will leave you to the ladies. This evening if agreeable to you, we'll call at the White House."

Aunt Sadie, having some friends to visit, went away presently, leaving Myrtle to entertain her lover, which she did by telling him all about his friends at home.

Billy Boyle was mayor as of old. General Hamilton, still hale and hearty, lived like a king upon his estate, which lay within twenty miles of Washington. Cousin Mary and her husband, the famous banker, were still abroad. Elmer was at home; he lived with Clara and their little son in the great mansion erected by her father in the heyday of his wealth and greatness. Papa had severed all connection with the bank, which Elmer now conducted in a much smaller way than had been the case in the great banker's time. The young man was not popular, though the feeling against him had worn away in a great measure. Clara was generally liked, though she was strangely indifferent, caring only for her little son, to whom she was passionately attached.

"Poor little Rosie," said Sherman, sadly, and Myrtle sorrowfully echoed the sigh. "Things are not always justly arranged in this world, Myrtle."

"Justice prevails in the end, Sherman," Myrtle gravely replied.

Governor Sagamore had never once visited them since his election. Dillingham came frequently; the same jolly Dick as of old. Once he had brought the wife and babies to Clarenceburg, where the family remained quite three weeks as Senator Watterson's guests; by which time the little ones had become so attached to Aunt Sadie that they refused to go with Dick, when finally he came to fetch them home.

All the afternoon they sat side by side, talking of the past, or wandered, hand in hand, about the apartments, examining the pretty paintings and odds and ends in the way of statuary and bric-a-brac with which Aunt Sadie, as was her custom, had filled every nook and corner of their temporary home.

Along towards evening they went together to the Capitol and obtaining admittance to the Senate gallery, they sat for half an hour looking down into the chamber at the busy

statesmen gathered there, among whom Senator Watterson, of Illinois, was not the least.

Momentous events crowding upon each other during the two years past had kept the country in a constant state of turmoil and excitement. Cuba's deplorable condition had imperatively demanded the nation's intervention, and the arguments pro and con, in public and in private life, were a source of endless agitation. The press teemed with assaults upon the President, and upon Senator Watterson, whose conservative attitude upon the all-absorbing question, coinciding with the stand taken by the nation's head, awakened bitterness and rancor in the breasts of the firebrands. While outspoken in his sympathy for our distressed and harried neighbors, the Illinois Senator was unalterably opposed to war. He believed that Cuba could be freed without resort to arms, and his speeches in the Senate upon the burning subject had called forth blame and praise in almost equal proportions. The war came in spite of all his efforts, and thus at once the Gordian knot was cut and Cuba freed. Though defeated in his endeavors, Senator Watterson's stand had endeared him to the more conservative of his countrymen, and his subsequent patriotic course when once war was on, gained him the esteem of the most radical. He was hailed on all sides as a man of rare sagacity, a statesman of real ability.

"Is he not grand?" said Myrtle, clasping her hands in an ecstasy, as she gazed down at her father. "He is our leader now, dear Sherman. He has openly endorsed Woman's Suffrage, and has spoken for us in public. Oh, a number of times. All the world knows his sentiments. And he is listened to by earnest men and women everywhere—people who would pay no attention to poor me. It is strong men like Papa whom we must rely upon to carry our Cause to ultimate victory."

She pointed out the more notable statesmen in the assembly. Senator Hoar, the Massachusetts sage; Hanna, the newly elected Senator from Ohio; Senator Hale, of the New England group; Senator Pettus, of Alabama; hot-headed Pettigrew, the Dakota Senator; Senators Tillman and Morgan, the Southern leaders. Senator Lodge, too,

was there, Hoar's colleague, and Fairbanks, of Indiana, and battling Ingalls, of Kansas, and various others.

"I hope Uncle Winfield will speak," said Sherman.

But his wish remained ungratified for that time at least. Senator Watterson sat mutely at his desk, or chatted with other Senators around him. There seemed to be little doing. An air of quiet informality pervaded the assembly. Apparently nothing short of an earthquake could enliven proceedings here. A gentleman on the extreme right of the small half circle was talking away prosily. Pages darted briskly here and there. Senators were coming and going constantly passing in and out of the doors, which led on all sides into the mysterious interior; the presiding dignitary was holding a whispered conference with another gentleman.

"Let's carry him off, Sherman," whispered Myrtle.

They went down accordingly and sent in word of their presence, and before many minutes Senator Watterson came out to them.

"Sherman is disappointed, Papa," Myrtle said; "because you didn't rise and make a few remarks. I tell him he should have been here some months ago before war was declared."

"Ah! there was battling then, my lad," the Senator replied, chuckling. "Every day we had our little rumpus, which cleared the atmosphere and lent interest to the proceedings. Just now matters are quiet. There is a tension, though it may not be particularly observable. We're waiting."

"For what?"

"Who knows? Sampson and Schley are still to be heard from, you know. Have you visited the House yet, Sherman? No? Supposing we go over there for a minute or two?"

They made their way through the spacious corridor into the circular chamber beneath the towering dome, pausing long enough to examine the great paintings which adorned the walls.

In Statuary Hall they remained for a time admiring the sculptured figures of great men dead and gone. There were many visitors in the great building going about in groups

under proper guidance. Sherman caught glimpses as they moved along of interior apartments stacked high with documents. An army of governmental clerks were employed round about them; minor cogs in that mighty machine operated by the two governing branches of Congress and directed by the will of the people—the Government.

The Hall of the House of Representatives was several times the size of the Senate Chamber; and of statesmen there were five times as many. Their desks were arranged in a vast half circle, facing the Speaker's lofty platform. Perhaps one-third of the desks were occupied. Men stood about in twos and threes, or sat in deep confabulation. There was plenty of life and movement here, but apparently the same individual indifference to collective proceedings as manifested by the higher body. The character of the assembly differed widely from that at the other end of the Capitol. The men were younger; carried themselves more freely. An occasional laugh bespoke a cordial good-fellowship. The hum of many murmuring voices arose in swelling volume.

"They seem to have little to do," observed Sherman, looking down from a point of vantage.

A gentleman just beneath him was speaking, but without force or eloquence or fire, such as he had imagined the rule in legislative proceedings. Some few members gathered around were listening attentively, but the majority of those present paid not the slightest attention to the man or his subject.

"The work, my son, is all done in the committee rooms," said Senator Watterson. "There at the present moment you may find the ablest and most valuable members at work. There is where the most momentous questions are decided—not upon the floor of the House, as you might suppose. Everything that is done is done by committee; every question that comes up is referred to committee. Our government, in fact, is nothing more than a government by committee. And a mighty good thing, my lad. These various committees are made up of the working members, strong, able, resourceful, brainy men, who perhaps never are heard of outside of their committee rooms. They are

not orators; they care nothing for debate; they are workers. These are the men who regulate expenditure, make laws, inaugurate improvements—in a word, who carry on the government. Come along now. We are due at the White House in half an hour."

"One moment, Uncle," cried Sherman. "Is not that Uncle Joe coming in—Cannon of Illinois?"

"Yes; he's one of the workers—a genuine watch dog, old Uncle Joe. You've heard him speak at Clarenceburg? To be sure! The district he represents is right beside ours. See that young fellow over there? That's Bailey, of Texas; he's leader of the minority—a brainy man. There, too, is Mr. Curtis, Myrtle's uncle."

"But where is Reed, the Czar?"

"See him standing there, conversing with Riley of California."

"But why isn't he in the chair?"

"Do you expect him to roost there like a graven image all day?" cried the Senator, laughing. "No, no, he's got to stretch his legs occasionally. That is Martindale in the chair now. But we haven't a minute to lose now, children. It will never do to keep the President waiting. What do you say, Sherman?" he added, with a sly wink, as they swung briskly through the wide corridor. "We'll walk."

"That suits me, Uncle."

But Myrtle cried out against a purpose so preposterous, and the Senator, shaking with silent laughter, led the way to the rear where a carriage was awaiting them. The great man was in high good humor, full of jocular remarks and humorous allusion.

"You have no idea, Sherman, what a great man a Senator is here at Washington," said Myrtle when they were well under way. "You should see the luxury with which he is surrounded! It's lovely being a Senator's daughter!"

"I am sure of it," Sherman replied.

"But I'm thinking of resigning," Senator Watterson said gravely.

"The idea!" shrieked Myrtle, shaking him.

"Fact. They coddle us too much."

"It seems to me," observed Sherman; "that all you have is provided by yourselves—even the coddling."

"Ha, ha!" cried Myrtle. "Now, Senator, will you be good!"

The Senator rumbled with laughter, but protested vigorously against an assumption so preposterous.

The avenue was thronged. Carriages dashed past with uncommon spirit; cars roared their noisy way along; monster autos went thundering by. A host of people were promenading. The Senator pointed out various places of interest along the way, and promised at an early opportunity to take the young man through the numerous government buildings.

"That shall be my mission, Papa," Myrtle cried, giving her lover's hand a tender squeeze.

"You have seen many capitals in your travels, no doubt," Senator Watterson said, with pride; "but I'll venture to say, my boy, that you have seen none more charming than our own Washington."

The White House looked quaint and old-fashioned, set down in the midst of a beautiful park, but like all mansions of ancient design, it was pervaded by a home-like atmosphere that was altogether charming. The interior was fully in keeping with its manifold beauties without.

Entering by way of the main portico into a spacious vestibule, they were conducted by a uniformed attendant into a private waiting room to the right. Senator Watterson sent his card in to the President and having taken the precaution hours before of requesting a few minutes, he was promptly conveyed with his party to a small drawing room, where Aunt Sadie met them coming in with a sweet faced lady, the President's wife, who greeted the Senator and his daughter with a pleasant smile and a kind word of welcome, and to whom Sherman was introduced in form by his proud aunt.

"My boy of whom I told you, Mrs. President," said Aunt Sadie beaming. "He has been away on his travels and only returned to-day, taking us all by surprise."

"I am glad to meet Aunt Sadie's boy," said the President's lady, extending a kind hand to the young man.

Sherman bowed over the fragile little hand with deep reverence, while Aunt Sadie who seemed to be on terms of the sweetest friendship with the President's lady, bent down to whisper a word in her ear, at which she gave a little cry of delight and taking Myrtle's hand in hers she kissed the girl's blushing cheek with much warmth and feeling.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Watterson," she said smiling upon Sherman. "I wish you every joy my dear Aunt Sadie. Senator you must be proud and happy in your children."

And then the President came in, and the gentle lady's eyes wandered away from them all to meet the glance of the grave-faced man, who had entered quietly behind them.

"Good evening, Senator," he said genially.

He bowed gravely to Aunt Sadie, who patting her hair with prodigious energy sought to withdraw behind Myrtle. That young lady met the President's smiling glance with the outward composure that characterized her.

"Permit me, Mr. President, to introduce my boy to you," said Senator Watterson, smiling. "Mr. Sherman Watterson who has just returned to his native country after two years' absence abroad."

The President held out his hand to Sherman regarding the young man with a grave kindliness that seemed habitual with him. Sherman colored high, as he met the plump white hand of the nation's head.

"I did not know, Senator," said the President retaining the young man's hand for a moment in his, "that you had so stalwart a son!"

"He is not my son, sir," replied Mr. Watterson smiling.

The President looked more and more surprised. The sweet-faced lady who long ago had drawn near to her husband bent towards him now, and whispered a word in his ear.

"Ah!" said the great man with a droll glance at the Senator. "He is no *yet* your son you mean, Senator? Well, well, that is even better."

He asked Sherman about his travels and listened to the young man's replies with an air of deep interest. He had travelled very little, he said, speaking with an air of regret

as if he rather envied the young man his good fortune. They remained for half an hour or so, the President conversing with Senator Watterson part of that time on various topics of current interest. He drew Sherman into the discussion in the most natural way, and completely won that young man's heart by gravely agreeing with the views which he modestly expressed. Sherman was delighted with his genial host, and with the sweet-faced lady his wife, who beamed so kindly upon them all.

"You must dine with us, all of you, before you go home," the President said at parting. "When can you come, Senator?"

"Any time will suit me, Mr. President," replied Senator Watterson.

"Then say to-morrow evening."

The President once more shook hands with Sherman and they took their leave.

"Well, Sherman, what do you think of him?" asked Mr. Watterson when they were again on the street.

"A man after my own heart, Uncle," said Sherman heartily.

"A truly great man, my son, as history will record. His burden is a heavy one, yet you have seen how serenely it is borne."

They did not go out at all that evening, but remained in their apartments with Sherman whose travels formed the principal topic of conversation. Sherman had kept his eyes open on his way through the world. He had made a study of foreign customs and could talk interestingly of alien peoples; their mode of life, their system of government; the status of their women—all matters of absorbing interest to Mr. Watterson and to Myrtle. They had a thousand questions to ask him, and Aunt Sadie had a thousand things to tell him of home and friends. And so the hours passed on the wings of the wind.

As the evening waxed later visitors began dropping in on the Senator. Mr. Martindale, Member from Illinois came with Senator Traviston, both old friends of Sherman. Then came Mr. Curtis, Member from Maryland and brother-in-law to Senator Watterson—a frail looking middle-aged

man with tired eyes and a cough that gave him little peace. He was accompanied by his small daughter Marian, a brown-haired little fairy, who could not be withdrawn from Aunt Sadie's arms whither she fled on her arrival. Two or three ladies, Aunt Sadie's cherished friends completed the gathering, until the unexpected arrival of General Hamilton. Sherman was sitting beside Mr. Curtis, who was unfolding to him a tale of woe concerning the constitutional weakness of which he was the victim when the General came in. He sprang to his feet with an exclamation of delight and in three strides was by the General's side, and in another moment had caught the old warrior in a bear-like embrace, which sadly marred the General's dignity of deportment.

"Release me, suh," he cried. "How da'h you take such a libu'ty with me? I have a good mind to cane you fo' yo' impudence, suh!"

But though he spoke thus sternly his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and with his small white hand, he was tugging with manifest delight at his neat imperial.

"Who told you of my return?" demanded Sherman, when the General had paid his respects to Aunt Sadie and exchanged greetings with the others.

"I saw Daniel, suh," the old warrior replied; "stand off, suh, and let me look at you."

He surveyed the young man from head to foot with vast approval.

"Travel has done you good, boy," he said gravely.

"And time has dealt lightly with you, General," Sherman declared, pressing the old man's hand. "I declare to you, you look younger than when I last saw you."

And indeed there was much reason in the young man's remark. The General stood as squarely erect as of old; his countenance was as ruddy; his eye as keen, his hand as firm as ever. Perhaps his thick wavy hair had whitened more and the grim mustache and imperial no doubt had taken on a frostier hue; but there was no other visible change in him. He was as elegantly attired as in the old days at Clarenceburg, and in no single particular had he altered his mode of dress for the past fifty years.

"Well, boy," he said, sinking into the chair which Sher-

man had placed for him. "What have you got to say fo' yo'self? Still afraid to kiss a pretty girl?"

"I've kissed many a one since I saw you last," Sherman replied.

"What!" cried the General delightedly. "Say that again!"

"Never mind," said Sherman hastily.

"Say it again, suh," cried the General pounding his knee with delight. "I shall tell Myrtle that upon the honoh of a gentleman!"

"If you do, General, I'll forswear your friendship."

The General still roared with laughter, protesting his unbelief with every breath.

"Well, boy," he said, at last; "if you went no fu'tha' I have nothing mo' to say. Alas!" he ended suddenly with a sigh. "You have chosen the wiser pa't, my boy!" he said with emotion. "When I think of the fate of little Dimples my heart grows sad. Had I but taken measchas in season she might now be living a happy wife and mothah. But I never dreamed of such an ending to her little romance. I have known many wild blades, but not one so base with a soul so black as to seduce a young girl and desu't her in her hour of trouble. I saw the two together often but had no other thought than that it would end in tha'h happy union. You have chosen the manly pa't, Sherman, believe me!"

"It was clear to me before I went away that he was tiring of little Rosie," replied Sherman; "but I had no idea of the true state of affairs. The news of Rosie's ruin came upon me like a bolt out of a clear sky. That is always the way, however, I think. Tell me, General, "he continued after a slight pause; "how are you enjoying life? How do you like the new South?"

"Not at all, suh," the old warrior replied, shaking his head sadly. "Everything is changed, and changed immeascha'bly fo' the wo'se. Nothing is the same. All is so'did business now wha'h fo'ma'ly was dignity and ease. The ancient spirit is depa'ted. In its place now reigns a strange new doctrine, which levels all distinction. It is sad. Degeneration is everywha'h. Why, suh," continued

the old man with blazing scorn, "young Ha'vey Fa'hfax, great grandson of Majah Fa'hfax, the hero of a hundhad meetings, suh, the pride of Jackson's a'my—young Ha'vey, suh, is selling boots and shoes in Richmond at this very moment, suh! And General Fo'tesque, my old brothah-in-a'ms is engaged in the liqua' business. It is outrageous, suh! And this is true not only of Vu'ginia but of the entire South. No matta' in what direction you jo'ney, suh, every-wha'h you see the same so'did activity. The sons of gentlemen, suh, lo'ds of ten thousand aca's in tha'h time, masters of five hundhad slaves have become tradesmen, suh, have gone into the business of manufacto'ing, of buying and selling—bahta'ing fo' gold on the ground wha' a few decades ago tha'h fathahs reigned as kings, suh! They tell me that all this makes fo' the commu'cial greatness of the South, suh! It may be, I do not know, noh ca' to know anything about it, but this I know that in the past a greater, stronger race of men dwelt in my native Southland, than dwells tha'h now. Whatevah the futcha' may hold fo' us be sure our glory dwells wholly in the past, which never mo' can be called into life again."

There were tears in the old man's eyes when he finished. Sherman pressed his hand in silent sympathy.

"I think, General," he said; "that you fail to take into account the conditions that confronted the South at the close of the war. How often have you told me of the ruin and desolation on every hand? You left it all behind and came North, and you cannot know the enormous difficulties with which those who remained had to cope. With homes laid waste and servants scattered; with a hostile government to contend with, and a horde of greedy vultures overrunning the land, it was to the survivors a question of existence purely. How was it possible under circumstances so adverse to re-establish even a semblance of old conditions? There was not the remotest possibility of re-creating the past. The old autocratic South was founded upon slavery and made possible by slavery. Nothing else! With slavery abolished the system was crushed out of existence, and all that remained to the South was for her to adapt herself to the new conditions, which meant engaging in active pursuits

in trade and manufacture. This was done accordingly and I say to you General Hamilton that it is to the eternal credit of the new South that despite the all but overwhelming handicap under which she labored, she rose to her present commercial greatness. Now, now, old friend!" he interrupted himself with a laugh as he observed the General swelling and purpling with the rage engendered by this contradiction. "Shake not thy hoary locks at me; you taught me to form my own opinions and when formed to express them without fear or favor, and if I now and then differ with you, you must even bear with me. The old South was modeled upon the system prevailing in the Old World at the time of its inception. That such a system of comparative autocracy continued so long in this Republic was due to slavery alone. It had to go. The South is the better for it. The country is the better for it; the whole world is the better for it. No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent, said Old Abe Lincoln, and depend upon it, General, honest Abe knew what he was talking about. The new South, as was inevitable, was modeled upon the North and side by side with the North, she has grown until now she knows no supremacy. You went away and remained away for thirty years; you returned expecting to find things pretty much as you remembered them before the Rebellion. You were disappointed and naturally, but depend upon it, old friend, everything is for the best."

The General remained silent so long that Sherman feared he had offended him past forgiveness. But no, the old warrior passed his hand across his brow once or twice and sorrowfully shook his head.

"I da'h say you are right, boy," he said; "I da'h say you are right. But—" he shook his head again and sighed.

"And for yourself, old friend," asked Sherman; "are you happy?"

"I have no pu'sonal grievances, suh," the General replied. "All is peace around me and sweet tranquility. Brave boys, and cha'ming girls are growing up around me. I spend pa't of each summer with my friends in the West and all winter have them near me. Yes, I am happy, boy."

"I am glad."

"What are yo' plans, suh, fo' the futcha'? Have you fo'med any plans as yet?"

"Lots of 'em, General. I propose to take an active part in my uncle's business for one thing, and for another I shall revive the old Chronicle."

"Aha!" cried the General, his eyes sparkling with delight.

"Not in the old form exactly, General, but somewhat after the manner of these Eastern weeklies—Harper's—Collier's—Leslie's—you know them? I hope to build up an immense constituency. You General shall be senior editor; and besides shall write for me that history of American Journalism of which you have often spoken in the past.

"You give me new life, boy!" cried the General pounding his knee with his hand.

"Uncle Winfield too shall become a contributor. I have already settled that he is to write a history of American Politics for the new publication. There is no one in this country so well equipped as he. I have not yet spoken to him about it, but I am confident that with your assistance I shall be able to talk him into it. All this General is still in the air. Just at present I am determined if it is not too late to join some regiment of volunteers. If I can get a commission, all right; if not I'll enlist."

"Nonsense, suh, nonsense!" cried the General; but clearly he was tremendously pleased with the energy and spirit displayed by his old-time protege. "The wah is practically ovah. A me'h flurry I assuah you, suh. But come let us join the others. I see you cannot keep yo' eyes off yo' sweetheart. Ah! golden youth! Look at her suh, and obsu've her stolen glances; obsu've, too, the eyes of yo' good aunt, how faithfully they follow yo' every movement, and say, have you the heart to think of leaving these two loving women so soon after returning to them? Nonsense, suh, I say! You will visit me sho'tly, boy, I hope?"

"Indeed, General, I am looking forward to it."

"And I shall attend yo' wedding, boy."

"I would not regard it as my wedding, General, unless you were there; the most honored of our guests."

The General patted him on the shoulder with a gentle hand.

"Majah," he said, approaching the big man, who was standing apart with his political friends. "Travel has made a man of the boy I find."

"Yes, General," the Major replied. "He has poise and balance, not a doubt of it. We are proud of him. Sadie is almost beside herself with joy."

"And Myrtle?"

"And Myrtle also! There will be a wedding shortly, old friend. And such a wedding!"

Sherman joined Myrtle who had withdrawn from the other ladies, and with little Marian by her side was engaged in turning over a stack of pictures. Aunt Sadie still was sitting with her friends chatting quietly, but her loving eyes followed Sherman about everywhere.

"You've met my cousin Marian before haven't you Sherman?" asked Myrtle smiling brightly up at him.

"Marian and I used to be great friends. I spent three weeks at Marian's Maryland home two years ago."

"Two years ago!" mused Marian; "I must have been a little girl then."

She now was a slender little large-eyed maiden aged ten.

"Yes," said Sherman gravely; "you were a little girl then. Two years does make a wonderful difference, doesn't it?"

Marian nodded; and Myrtle to hide a smile bent down and pressed the little thing's cheek to hers.

The visitors remained fully an hour longer. General Hamilton was the last to depart, and for an hour or more the four sat together talking of the past and of the future. Then the Senator went away and Aunt Sadie followed after, leaving the lovers alone with their happiness.

"Myrtle," said Sherman drawing the girl close to his heart; "I have been thinking of something."

"Of what, dear?" asked Myrtle softly.

"Of our future. I was deeply impressed this evening by the very evident regard existing between the President and his lady-love."

"Ah, Sherman, everybody knows they are lovers still."

"I was wondering, dear, if we, after spending as many years together as have these two loving hearts, years of trial mayhap, of mutual sorrow and mutual suffering—if we will still continue lovers."

"Surely, surely, Sherman, you do not doubt it?" cried Myrtle.

"No, Myrtle, I do not doubt it," he replied deeply. "I never doubted it. But—but you haven't named the day yet, darling. When is it to be?"

"What, Sherman?" asked Myrtle looking away with blushing cheeks.

"Ah, you know! Our wedding day. As soon as we get home? Uncle tells me that Congress will probably adjourn this week—say Thursday a week, Myrtle."

"Goodness me, Sherman!" cried Myrtle aghast.

"What? Is that too soon? Well, say Thursday two weeks. You must remember that I've waited long, Myrtle—three long years."

"I know, I know, Sherman, but—but I can't get ready in that time! I must have dresses made and—and oh! there are a thousand, *thousand* things I've got to do before I can even *think* of naming the day."

"Now, I like that,'" growled Sherman. "Get ready! Why, what is there to get ready? You couldn't get a prettier dress than that one if you spent ten years at it, and I have no doubt you've got dozens of them stowed away! Honestly, Myrtle, I never believed in this thing of spending weeks and weeks in preparation. I don't want any fuss made about my wedding. No beating of tom-toms or blowing of brass horns if I can help it. If I had my way we'd go out like two sensible people and have the knot tied at the first parsonage. But I suppose you'd never give in to that?"

"No, indeed!" cried Myrtle. "Surely, surely, Sherman, you cannot mean that!"

"But I do. Come, darling, let me have my way in this one thing, and you shall have yours all the rest of your life."

"But Aunt Sadie has set her heart on a grand wedding!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Sherman.

"Dearest Sherman," said Myrtle, half laughing at his despairing expression, yet very much in earnest. "We owe something to society, and society demands certain conventional observances. And surely, my Sherman, our marriage is not so small and slight a thing that you would enter into it in the same spirit in which you go about your everyday affairs?"

"No, no, Myrtle. Humph! I never thought of it quite in that way."

"You see, dear, we can be married but once and a marriage when rightly regarded is so solemn a thing that—that—you see, Sherman!"

"Indeed, you are right, Myrtle. What a wise little woman. I greatly fear, however," said Sherman with extraordinary penetration, "that I'll come off second best in all our little differences hereafter."

"Oh, no, Sherman," protested Myrtle blushing and smiling. "Oh, no, no, no!"

But she settled herself in his arms with quite a comfortable little shake as if the future held no terrors at all in store for her.

"You see, Sherman," she said ingenuously, "Aunt Sadie's heart is so set on having a grand wedding."

"Aunt Sadie!" cried Sherman laughing tenderly. "I know somebody whose heart is even more set on it."

He kissed that somebody many times quite as if he enjoyed her little subterfuge and was proud of it and her. And she submitted sweetly and responded with tenderness and joy.

Behind the portieres Aunt Sadie stood clutching her brother's arm.

"Look, Winfield, look!" she whispered in great excitement. "Do you see them, brother? Aren't they sweet? Do, do look, Winfield."

"I am looking, Sadie," replied Mr. Watterson softly.

"Now, come away."

Together they retreated to the Senator's little den where

Aunt Sadie promptly collapsed into a chair and proceeded to fill the room with little delighted cries, and gurgling gasps, and long-drawn sighs. There she sat for full five minutes, shaking from head to foot, with tears streaming down her cheeks, beating her hands together and stamping her feet, the very embodiment of riotous mirth. And when at last she managed to speak all she said was, "I told you so!"

—THE END.—

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